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# NEWSBREAK

*We Make Sense of the News*

APRIL 24, 2006 **Php75**



## THE REAL BEST LEADERS

WHAT IF THEY WERE  
PRESIDENT?

6 OUTSTANDING  
LOCAL OFFICIALS  
TELL PUBLIC  
MANAGERS  
WHAT TO DO



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# Best Leaders

PRESIDENT ARROYO couldn't help boosting herself. Perhaps that is the way beleaguered leaders behave. In the face of low approval ratings and noisy attempts by the opposition and the military rebels to oust her, she likes to tell us that God is on her side and that it is God's will that she is our president.

That is why the President unabashedly declared that she is the best person to lead us in these trying times.

The rhetoric is similar to that of President George W. Bush. In major speeches to the American nation, he often invokes God and uses religious language when he talks about the mission of the US in the world. It has been reported that Bush told an evangelist, before he ran for president, that he felt "like God wants me to run for president."

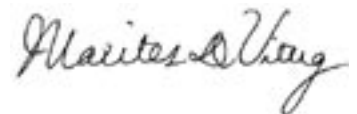
We take issue with leaders appropriating religion for their self-interest. It alienates many, including those of other religions, and tends to make governance faith-based. While religion provides great comfort to the President, it poses a danger. It stops critical thinking and honest reflection.

We like to show, in this issue, that leadership need not arise from proclamations of anointment by God. Leadership is about serving the public interest. Leadership in a true democracy is about being elected to cater to the common good.

We take the long view that leaders of that mold should eventually move on to national posts and that the public should get to know them and give them a chance to expand their roles and constituencies.

This is only the first of our special reports on leadership; we focus on elected officials. Definitely, our choices here are limited by space and time. But what we find assuring is that we do not have a dearth of good leaders. They are in villages, towns, cities, and provinces. They are out there—and discovering them is part of our work as journalists in search of the news.

So, here's the good news. And more to come.



You can reach Marites Dañguilan Vitug at: [marites@newsbreak.com.ph](mailto:marites@newsbreak.com.ph)





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LUIS LIWANAG

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# Magandang araw mula sa San Miguel

Sa pagsisikap, natutupad ang maraming pangarap. Alam ng San Miguel ito.

Kaya naman sinisikap nito na gawing mas masarap, mas maginhawa ang bawat araw.

Itinalaguyod ang mga programang nakatutulong sa pagpapaligid ng buhay at kabuhayan. Tula ng "Operation Limis Taal" sa Batangas na nangangalaga sa

kalusugan ng mga isda doon. At ang

"Tulong-tulong sa Tullahan" na muling binubuhay ang Tullahan River para sa kapakanan ng mga taga-Malabon at

Valenzuela. At siyempre, mahusay na gumagawa ang San Miguel Corporation

ng mga de-kalidad at abot-kayang mga produkto para sa bawat Pilipino.



SAN MIGUEL CORPORATION



## MINDORO, TOO, HAS YACON

YOUR ARTICLE "From Mystery to Wonder Crop" (NEWSBREAK, Jan. 30, 2006) by Ceasar Perante was revealing news to us since there have been yacon crops in the hills of Mindoro Oriental for many years. The Iraga (Mangyan) natives thrive on the crop, and they claim it has kept them, particularly their children, healthy and less susceptible to sickness. A few lowlanders, too, have found this root crop to their liking.

Visitors can visit the hills around San Teodoro, Puerto Galera, and Abra de Ilog to see for themselves the areas planted to yacon. The Mangyans will be glad to sell whatever can be harvested and assist people in subsistence farming.

**RUFINO AXALAN JR.**

*As assisted by the Mangyan Heritage Center  
Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro*

## 'HEED CHURCH ON CHA-CHA'

IT'S NOW time to consider the recommendation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) that "revising or amending our Constitution is best done through the constitutional convention (Con-Con)" and that "the reasons for constitutional change must be based on the common good rather than on self-serving interests of political dynasties."

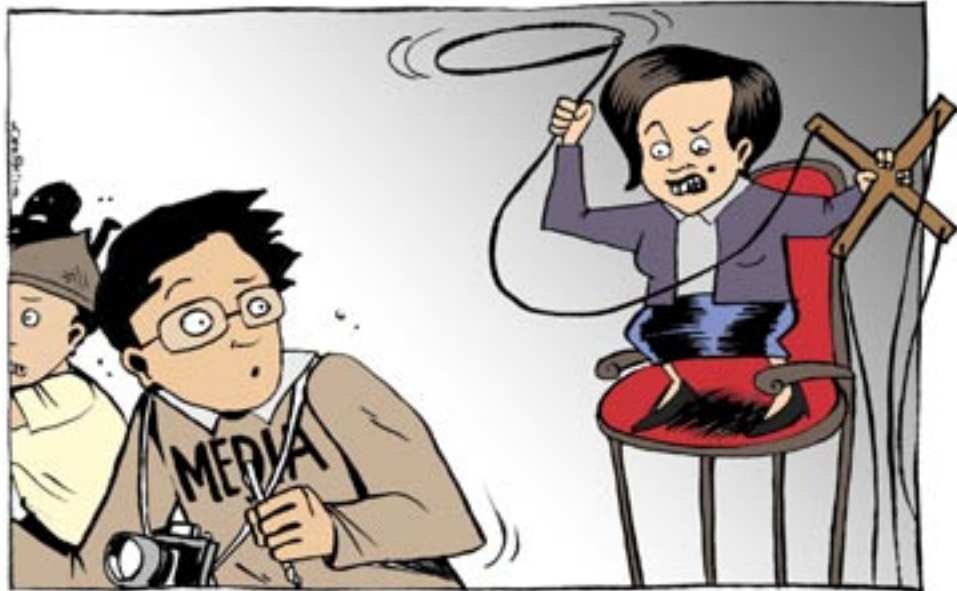
Many of our people, the CBCP, and the majority of the senators are also in favor of the Con-Con and the holding of the May 2007 elections as scheduled. Our government can save around P4 billion if Congress calls for a Con-Con and set the election of Con-Con delegates to coincide with the 2007 election of senators and local officials.

With these savings, the expenses of the Con-Con will be reduced to around P3 billion. This is less than half of 1 percent of our national budget.

The leaders of the House of Representatives must stop threatening the people with the alleged "huge expenses" of the Con-Con. Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri have often assured us that there's enough money for Charter change. Furthermore, there will be bigger tax collections next year because of the E-Vat. It's better to allow delegates of a less partisan, transparent, open, and broadly participatory Con-Con to revise our fundamental law.

**LEOPOLDO T. CAUSING**

*Citizen's Movement for a Federal Philippines  
Region 6  
La Paz, Iloilo City*



## BISHOPS STILL ACTIVE IN KME

FOR AND in behalf of the Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya (KME), I wish to correct the misimpression that Bishops Labayan, Tobias, and Iniguez have lain low in their involvement with KME.

They are still very active with us and are on top of every activity we have. We don't have any activity that is not approved by them. Aside from the three bishops, we have other religious people aligned with us now, like Bishop Navarra of Bacolod, who held a big rally in the name of KME in Bacolod recently and echoed our calls for the ouster of the illegitimate president. More unorganized groups have joined us.

**EMMA ROXAS**

*Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya  
emmaroxas@yahoo.com*

## E-LOAD BUSINESS

I VERY much appreciate the article "Selling Over the Airwaves" (NEWSBREAK, Aug. 30, 2004) by Lala Rimando. I was browsing over the Net for articles on how the "load" business is doing; good thing I found your article. It gave me a lot of insight and keeps me well informed.

I hope NEWSBREAK will write a follow-up article on how the industry is doing.

**MORRIS TAN**

*morrissytan@yahoo.com*

## 'JUST FOR SHOW'

THE RAID conducted by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) on 168 Shopping Mall was nothing but a public relations stunt to cover up for the failure of Customs chief Napo-

leon Morales to stop smuggled goods from entering the country. In the first place, why would the smuggled items be on sale in the malls if the Customs did its job to seize them at the air and sea ports?

Morales should receive, at the very least, a tongue-lashing from President Arroyo. The nerve of Morales to sell the raid as a successful operation of BOC when the seized smuggled goods merely provided tangible proof that he was sleeping on the job.

As if grabbing credit wasn't offensive enough, Morales pointed an accusing finger at the police and other government agencies for supposedly doing nothing to stop the sale of smuggled items. In effect, Morales is castigating other government agencies for not doing the job of the Customs.

This guy is really funny and should consider a career change.

But really, the smuggling problem has taken a far more sinister twist as information is now coming out that smuggled cheap clothes, electronics, and other stuff are being used to hide the entry of illegal drugs into the country. Parallel to this is the theory that the sale of the smuggled merchandise is really an operation to launder drug money.

The buzz is that the drug aspect of smuggling is coming to public light, thus the BOC chose to sacrifice the smuggled goods being sold at 168 Mall to deflect public attention from the drug angle.

President Arroyo should get to the bottom of this.

**IAN ADAD**

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## WHAT THE ELECTION RETURNS SAY

**I**N DECEMBER 2005, the Supreme Court (as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal or PET) allowed the opening of the ballot boxes from the towns of Taraka and Balindong in Sultan Kudarat that were in the custody of the House of Representatives. It was in relation to the protest filed by Loren Legarda, a candidate for vice president in the 2004 elections.

Legarda has asked the PET to allow the review of the election returns (ERs), which reflect the votes at the precinct level (a precinct has an average of 200 registered voters). In 2004, Congress based its count on the certificates of canvass (COCs), which supposedly summarize the ER figures of cities and provinces. The opposition has maintained that the COCs were tampered, but not the ERs, so the figures in the ERs wouldn't add up to the figures in the COCs.

(Legarda's running mate, Fernando Poe Jr., had filed his own protest, which also asked for the review of ERs.



PRECINCT	COMELEC		NAMFREL		CONGRESS*	
<b>8-A</b> Taraka	Arroyo	44	Arroyo	44	Arroyo	120
	Poe	37	Poe	37	Poe	0
	De Castro	3	De Castro	3	De Castro	8
	Legarda	70	Legarda	70	Legarda	48
<b>15-A</b> Taraka	Arroyo	35	Arroyo	35	Arroyo	110
	Poe	68	Poe	68	Poe	31
	De Castro	8	De Castro	8	De Castro	100
	Legarda	102	Legarda	68	Legarda	30
<b>39-A</b> Bgy. Limbo, Balindong	Arroyo	21	Arroyo	21	Arroyo	60
	Poe	31	Poe	31	Poe	10
	De Castro	15	De Castro	15	De Castro	55
	Legarda	54	Legarda	54	Legarda	15
<b>23-A</b> Bgy. Dadayag, Balindong	Arroyo	26	Arroyo	26	Arroyo	75
	Poe	35	Poe	35	Poe	10
	De Castro	18	De Castro	18	De Castro	66
	Legarda	41	Legarda	41	Legarda	7

\*As copied by Legarda's lawyers

They had separate lists of provinces whose ERs they wanted reviewed. Poe died in December 2004, and his protest was dismissed in March 2005.)

When the representatives of the PET and the camps of Legarda and De Castro opened

the ballot boxes in Batasan, they found that all the ERs from Taraka and Balindong, except for five, were different from the copies that the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and the accredited poll watchdog National Citizens'

Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) have.

The ERs are accomplished by the poll clerk at the precincts in seven copies, so the holders of those copies—including Congress, the COMELEC, the majority party, the dominant

## PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE 101

**"B**RAZEN" IS how some campaign veterans describe how the Arroyo administration is conducting the people's initiative campaign. On March 25, a Saturday, some local officials conducted barangay assemblies, where attendees were asked to sign on sheets of paper that, in some places, didn't have headings or introductions.

The following day, the President's allies claimed those were signatures supporting the petition to introduce an amendment to the Constitution, and that they

had signed up two million persons by then. By Monday, they were announcing that they had collected four million signatures—one million shy of the minimum required by the Charter itself, based on the registered number of voters nationwide, which was 42 million in the last elections.

James Marty Lim of Marinduque, the national president of the Liga ng mga Barangay, doesn't mind these village assemblies being utilized as a forum to gather signatures for people's initiative. He doesn't even find fault in those "incentives" from the government being distributed to prospective





opposition party, and NAM-FREL—should have identical documents.

The discovery of non-matching ERs came three months after NEWSBREAK reported (“Cheats Inc,” NEWSBREAK, Sept. 12, 2005) that there was allegedly an administration operation to replace the genuine ERs at the House of Representatives with “corrected” ones that would match the COC figures.

But as Legarda pointed out in interviews, photographs and a video supposedly proving the operation are immaterial. The strongest evidence of the Batasan break-in, she said, was the Congress copy of the ERs being different from the rest of the set.

The PET denied Legarda’s motion to have the Congress copy of the ERs photocopied, but her lawyers were able to copy the figures. The opposition’s copy is with Poe’s widow, who has not turned over the documents to Legarda due to their alleged personal differences during the campaign. The administration wouldn’t release its copy.

Check out the samples on this spread. Unless the COMELEC is willing to admit that its copy of the ERs is fake, there’s reason to believe it’s the copy in Batasan that has been replaced.

—Miriam Grace A. Go

signatories.

It’s just that, Lim said in an interview on TV, his colleagues should have explained the proposals clearly and allowed a reasonable length of discussions among their constituents before they were asked to sign.

NEWSBREAK suggests that before you sign up for that people’s initiative petition, the following should make you think twice:

**1. It’s illegal to sign up at this time.** Republic Act 6735, the law passed in 1989 meant to implement the constitutional provision on people’s initiative, was declared “insufficient” by the Supreme Court in September 1997. The inadequacy of that law has not



RICO GONZALES

### IS HE A COP? IS HE A SPY? IS HE FOR REAL?

Ronaldo Puno, the controversial Interior and Local Government Secretary and go-to guy of the President, shocked the media when he donned fatigues during a recent training of the elite Special Action Force of the Philippine National Police. He never got to explain why he was wearing the SAF uniform. The reporters never got to ask him in the first place.

been addressed so far.

**2. The petition appears to be lacking in form and substance.** If the administration agents will insist on operating under RA 6735, however, their campaign doesn’t meet most of the requirements of the law for their petition to be valid. The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) should therefore reject it:

- **The form of the petition wasn’t determined by the COMELEC** (Sec. 3-f). They distributed their signature sheets without getting an official consultation with the poll body.

- **They lacked the summary and reasons for the proposal** that should be legibly written or printed in less than 100 words at

the top of every page of the petition, including the signature sheets (Sec. 5-c).

- **The extent of the proposal is debatable**, even if the signature-gatherers indicated the proposed amendment, which is to change the system of government from presidential to parliamentary. Sec. 10 says “no petition embracing more than one subject shall be submitted to the electorate.” Does one “subject” means one specific provision or one section or theme that may involve several provisions? If it’s the former, then the shift to parliamentarism can’t be proposed through a PI because it will affect several other provisions.

—Miriam Grace A. Go

# And they said...

“What a person believes, and thinks, can never be a crime: otherwise our prisons would be filled with novelists and essayists who express the darkest, the harshest and, often, the bloodiest, thoughts concerning our society.”

**MANUEL QUEZON III,**  
*Inquirer columnist, on the arrest of anti-Arroyo protesters on Baywalk*

“The old-time politicians of the status quo better stand back because this train has left the station. It is time for politicians to stand back or get run over.”

**PRESIDENT ARROYO**  
*on the people’s initiative campaign of her allies*

“The Cha-cha train would not run over those who oppose it. Instead, it would be derailed because it is a runaway train with rogue passengers who get paid to ride but would be hurt when the train gets off the loose tracks.”

**SEN. JOKER ARROYO**  
*reacting to the President’s statement*

# BEWARE THE BARGAIN HUNTER'S FURY



**T**HE ZEALOUS policeman guarding the shuttered 168 Shopping Mall tried to stop a photographer from shooting a sign saying the place had been closed by the Bureau of Customs. The darling mall of last Christmas is now being investigated for smuggling. Supposedly, the more legit malls had pressured Malacañang to close it down because of their current dismal sales reports. To spice up their pleas, they've squealed that 168 is owned by a lady friend of one of the most influential persons in the land.

Despite language restrictions, the idle foreign merchants hanging outside 168 were sputtering invectives understood universally. Their containers of cheap sandals once breezed through customs, unopened, and straight to 168 as long as they had the red sticker displayed of "Ma'am V." To compound matters, these merchants have paid their dues (translation: *long*) to uniformed men who brandish themselves as the city's finest, the same men who've now padlocked the place!

City Hall is not amused, either, since it's been so accommodating to these merchants with questionable visas but whose pesos are genuine. There are a lot of upset people there, wondering what all the mayor's loyalty to the President was for.

The merchants are not taking this lightly. Like the protesters on Baywalk, they've printed RESIGN T-shirts in red and passed them on to pedicab drivers, who, too, are disgruntled for lack of shoppers.

Outside the closed mall stood a throng of mournful looking shoppers. Some came in pedicabs, others in Pajeros. They were visibly agitated.

All those Palace measures recently, the likes of 1017, may be eclipsed by a larger disaster looming. Clipping civil liberties is one thing. But beware of a Filipino shopper deprived of a bargain. You might have the unintended people power revolution yet. ■

## POLITICS FOR BREAKFAST

**O**N THE days leading to Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's resignation, Thais designed creative anti-government visuals that appealed to the young and the old.

The *Bangkok Post* (<http://www.bangkokpost.com>) recently featured Samchai café in Ubon Ratchathani's Muang district that not only offers a breakfast package of fried eggs and Vietnamese-style

sausages but also provides customers a way to express and ventilate their political frustrations. The eatery is giving away writing paper to customers so they can write down their opinions on the political crisis besetting Thailand while having breakfast.

Owner Chavalit Ritthichai told the *Bangkok Post* that he hoped he was providing his customers a useful channel through which they could

relieve stress. "Right now it is quite difficult to talk about politics with people, including family members, and not get into a row," he told the newspaper. "Now they can jot down their thoughts to share with others while eating breakfast."

He admits that he sometimes finds himself arguing with his mother and wife about Thailand's political problems. He told the

newspaper that he had witnessed the quarrel of customers with contrasting views.

To encourage them to remain calm, Chavalit said he has put up a photo of Thailand's King. Some customers want more, however. One of them told the *Bangkok Post* that the café should provide them bigger space and put up a whiteboard on which to write. ■





By MARIE S. NERI

**F**OUR MONTHS since the controversial Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano left the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and more than a month since two more commissioners, Mehol Sadain and Rufino Javier, retired, the three positions remain vacant. Deliberations on the right candidates are ongoing, but the prolonged process has admittedly slowed down work in the commission.

With the local and congressional polls 13 months away and the possible conduct of a referendum for Charter change, COMELEC insiders say the three available slots must

be filled up soon.

COMELEC Chairman Benjamin Abalos said he is leaving the choices to the National Citizens Movement for Free Elec-

tions (NAMFREL) and Malacañang. Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., who is now presidential adviser on electoral reforms, is overseeing the selection process.

Guillermo Luz, executive director of the poll watchdog NAMFREL, said they initially selected 20 people as candidates, but pared down the list to five after interviews and discussions.

NAMFREL chairman Jose Concepcion, in a separate interview, said "there's a working committee" that has been doing all the interviews and research to determine and choose the suitable people to occupy the vacant posts in the poll body. He admitted that choosing the appropriate nominees is the hardest part specially after the commission had been involved in the "Hello, Garci" scandal, where Garcillano was accused of rigging the May 2004 elections in favor of President Arroyo.

"We are checking the names very well because we want the next composition of the COMELEC to be depoliticized," Concepcion told NEWSBREAK. He said three persons so far had passed their criteria but that they still hoped to get two more to complete the five nominees to be submitted to Davide.

NEWSBREAK learned that some of those sounded off to join the COMELEC are hesitant to do so because Abalos still chairs the commission. It was in his watch that the "Hello, Garci" scandal happened—and the poll body has since suffered from a credibility problem.

Asked if there is truth to the reports that NAMFREL is picking a candidate each from the opposition, from Mindanao, and from the business community, Concepcion said "there are nominees coming from Lanao del Sur. However, we are careful on this because of the reputation and issues of electoral fraud."

Concepcion said they are not getting any nominees from the opposition or any political parties because they want people who "will serve the country and not just a few who protect their own interest."

The names to be submitted by NAMFREL to Davide to possibly occupy the three vacant seats in COMELEC include Emigdio Tanjuatco, former Antipolo congressman, and William Dichoso of the Presidential Commission on Good Government.

Aside from the NAMFREL nominees, names popping up to fill the three slots include the current head of the Public Attorney's Office Persida Acosta, Taguig City Mayor Sigrifido Tinga, and COMELEC Region 1 Director Romy Lobregat, who personally applied for the position. Other

PAUL MATA

sources say the current head of the commission's legal department, Alioden Dalaig, is interested in a seat, while others are saying that Roque Bello, the controversial former COMELEC Region 3 director, is also a contender (Bello denied this in an earlier interview with NEWSBREAK).

Names of three former COMELEC chairmen—Alfredo Benipayo (who just resigned as Solicitor General), Harriet Demetriou, and Christian Monsod—and former Commissioner Manuel Barcelona are being floated as well. But Luz stressed that the commission does not allow former officials to be re-appointed, adding they have not recommended any ex-commissioners.

COMELEC Commissioner Resurreccion Borra, a retired director of the COMELEC who was appointed in 2001 as commissioner, said the restrictions apply if the candidate has already served a seven-year term as appointed official.

Citing the case of Commissioner Barcelona, Borra said he was nominated, served in the commission as an ad-interim appointee, but was never confirmed. He was bypassed by the Commission on Appointments, therefore the possibility of being nominated is not remote.

He noted that there is an urgent need now to fill the three vacant commissioners' seats. He explained that the poll body is having difficulties in solving the pending cases in both divisions because of the lack of quorum. He said that for the first division, it is only Commissioner Florentino Tauson who has been left behind, while in the second division it is only him and newly confirmed Commissioner Romeo Brawner.

"We are having problems now with the quorum. In our en banc session, when one is absent, there is no quorum at all," Borra said.

Many are watching if the new appointees will make a difference. ■

## ► Verbatim

# SWEETHEART DEAL

**O**MBUDSMAN PROBERS see a "possibility of filing an impeachment complaint against the incumbent COMELEC officials" for the counting machines contract. These are excerpts from the findings of the Ombudsman's Field Investigation Office. Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez has yet to act on the findings.

The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) had committed the following irregularities during the bidding and award of the Contract to Megapacific eSolutions Inc or MPEI:

- Awarded the Contract in favor of "Mega Pacific Consortium," an entity that had not participated in the bidding;

- Chairman [Benjamin] Abalos signed the actual Contract with "Mega Pacific eSolutions Inc.," a company that did not meet the eligibility requirements;

- Awarded Contract with inexplicable haste, without checking and observing mandatory financial, technical and legal requirements;

- Accepted the computer hardware or the ACMS and software even if, at the time of the award, they had undeniably failed to pass eight (8) critical requirements designed to safeguard the integrity of election especially the following three (3) items:

- a. They failed to achieve the accuracy rating criteria of 99.9995 percent set up by the COMELEC itself;

- b. They were not able to detect previously downloaded results at various canvassing or consolidation levels and to prevent these from being imputed again; and,

- c. They were unable to print statutory required audit

trails of the count/canvass at different levels without any loss of data.

- Awarded and implemented the Contract at a price inclusive of taxes, in violation of Section 8 of RA 8436;

- In the award of the Contract, the COMELEC failed to consider the prevailing currency exchange rate at the time the bid was opened on April 15, 2003, in violation of its own bidding rules and procedures;

- The Contract is onerous to the Government considering that the COMELEC acquired the ACMS at a price almost double its actual or legitimate price.

- Further, by taking into consideration all of the established facts and surrounding circumstances of the bidding and award, especially the fact that these were already declared NULL and VOID by the Highest Court for being irregular and illegal, one could easily give the conclusion that the awarding of the contract to MPEI was the product of a "Sweetheart Deal."

- The concerned COMELEC officials must bear full responsibility, and be held criminally and administratively liable. They completely undermined and disregarded the rationale and policy underlying public bidding mandated by law. Due to their unprecedented acts, the purpose of going through the mandated public bidding exer-



cise was completely defeated. The COMELEC virtually seeded MPEI, or was given undue preference and advantage during the bidding and awarding of the Contract despite its failure to meet the eligibility and technical requirements for the project.

- These flaws...are serious and fatal, amounting to an impeachable and actionable crimes/offenses, as well as administrative infractions. Undoubtedly, the concerned COMELEC officials gravely abused their power and discretion while in the performance of their official duties and functions.

- ...The concerned COMELEC officials who are not impeachable officers, and those while impeachable but already retired, and/or their terms of office already expired, should therefore be held criminally liable, and held administratively liable for Dishonesty; Grave Misconduct; and Conduct Prejudicial to the Best Interest of the Service.





• These violations were committed by the mentioned public officers and private persons, by conspiring, as clearly manifested by their participations in the bidding and award of the Contract. They conspired in the grant of unwarranted benefits, undue preference and advantage to MPEI, which acts resulted to the award of the Contract deemed grossly disadvantageous to the government.

**C**ONSEQUENTLY, AND pursuant to Section 22 of the Ombudsman Act of 1989 (RA6770), this Office should likewise conduct a formal inquiry for the purpose of determining the possibility of filing a verified impeachment complaint before the House of Representatives against the following incumbent and impeachable COMELEC officials namely:

1. **BEJAMIN S. ABALOS, JR.**  
Chairman, COMELEC

Participation:  
• For approving the award of the COMELEC Modernization



Project – Phase II (Automated Counting Machines) to MPEI, an unqualified bidder;

- For signing, and entering into irregular and illegal Contract relative to the project, and for signing the related Agreement for the payment of the said project;
- For allowing the payment of the said project;
- For allowing the payment of unnecessary expenses for the opening of L/C

2. **RESURRECCION Z. BORRA**,  
Commissioner, and Commissioner- In-Charge, Phase II, Modernization Project, COMELEC



Participation:  
• As Commission-In-Charge for COMELEC Modernization Project – Phase II  
• For approving the award of the COMELEC Modernization Project-Phase II (Automated Counting Machines) to MPEI, an unqualified bidder;  
• For requesting to the DOF to grant, and in fact the latter granted, tax and duty exemptions to all importations made by the MPEI relative to the items subject matter of the Contract despite the fact that these taxes and duties were already included in the Contract price.



3. **RUFINO S.B. JAVIER**,  
Commissioner, COMELEC

Participation:  
• For approving the award of the Modernization Proj-

ect – Phase II (Automated Counting Machines) to MPEI, an unqualified bidder;

4. **MEHOL K. SADAIN**,  
Commissioner, COMELEC

Participation:  
• For approving the award of the COMELEC Modernization Project-Phase II (Automated Counting Machines) to MPEI, an unqualified bidder;



5. **FLORENTINO A. TUAZON, JR.**, Commissioner, COMELEC

Participation  
• For approving the award of the COMELEC Modernization Project-Phase II (Automated Counting Machines) to MPEI, an unqualified bidder.



# INTELLIGENCE MAKEOVER

Can the two new leaders of the sensitive military unit restore its credibility?

By **RAPHAEL MARTIN**

**L**OST IN the hubbub over the supposed coup plot against President Arroyo was the assumption by two senior military officers of sensitive posts in the controversy-plagued military.

On February 7, Maj. Gen. Rodrigo Maclang took over as deputy chief of staff for intelligence (J2) in place of Rear Admiral Tirso Danga, who was promoted to commander of the Armed Forces Western Command based in Puerto Princesa City. Danga headed the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) in 2004, when it was reported to have wiretapped the conversations between President Arroyo and election commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

On March 9, Commodore Leandro Calderon assumed as chief of the ISAFP after the retirement of Brig. Gen. Marlu Quevedo.

Both members of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class of 1976, Maclang and Calderon could prove to be less controversial than their predecessors, although not necessarily less efficient.

Maclang is decisive and can be a slave driver, says an intelligence officer, who notes that the new J2 is strict with deadlines.

"He carries with him very good credentials and always aims high. He is one of our achievers who always gives his best shot," PMA Superintendent Brig. Gen. Leopoldo Maligalig said of Maclang, his batch mate at the PMA.

A native of Surigao City, Maclang is a bemadalled officer with three distinguished service star medals, a Presidential Legion of Honor, an Outstanding Achievement Medal, and three Bronze Cross medals.

He has attended training courses here and abroad, including a Supply Management Course at the



**THE NEW TEAM:** Maj. Gen. Rodrigo Maclang and Commodore Leandro Calderon (right)

PAUL MATA

## ■ HOT SEAT ■

**This is the best time to look into intelligence**

**I**N A rare interview, the new men at the helm of the Armed Forces intelligence—**Maj. Gen. Rodrigo Maclang**, deputy chief of staff for intelligence, and **Commodore Leandro Calderon**, chief of the Intelligence Service of the AFP (ISAFP)—spoke to NEWSBREAK editors Marites Dañguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria. They requested that the interview focus on the reforms they plan to implement. Excerpts:

**What is the most urgent thing you need to do?**

**Maclang:** Our marching order from the secretary of national defense, even before we assumed office, is to reform the intelligence system. We've made a road map. We call it the IRIS

or Improvement and Revitalization of Intelligence System program. This is the best time to look into intelligence. For several years, it's been neglected.

**Calderon:** It's very hard for us to reveal some information. Pardon us if we're not too

open. They (the enemies) would know our vulnerabilities and strengths.

*(Maclang gave us a one-page summary of reform areas which include intelligence fusion, effective counter-intelligence, improvement of doctrine development and training, and intelligence computer and communication systems.)*

**What's your timetable?**

**Maclang:** While we're transforming, we're performing. Identify the doables and work on them immediately, even while we're doing the 10-year development plan.

**Is there a career path for intelligence officers?**

**Maclang:** That's part of our reforms.

**Calderon:** We have an intelligence eligibility list which requires tenure, schooling. As you

go along, you pile up points. At times, it's not followed. What is important is we have a set of rules.

**Do you agree that the credibility of the intelligence agencies has suffered because of the Garci tapes?**

**Maclang:** We didn't look into that anymore.

**Calderon:** Don't get us wrong. We saw the previous condition as a benchmark from where we will start.

**Don't you want to go to the bottom of what happened [in the wiretap scandal]?**

**Calderon:** That's a hard question.

**Maclang:** The accomplishments of the intelligence agencies have not been highlighted. We'd rather forget that part because it does not represent our past.





WILLIAM GONZALES

US Army Quarter Master School (1981), Command and General Staff Course also at the US Army (1997), and Defense Resources Management Course at the Defense Resource Management Institute in the US (2001).

Maclang is also described in military circles as “Angie’s boy,” a reference to recently appointed Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes, former defense secretary and former Armed Forces chief of staff.

Maclang’s last three assignments are said to have been due to his close association with Reyes. These three previous positions are assistant chief of staff for operations at the Southern Command; chief of the Armed Forces Command Center in Camp Aguinaldo; and commanding general of the Light Armor Brigade in Capas, Tarlac.

An Army officer said that several officers previously assigned with Reyes are now with Maclang.

About which, Maclang told NEWSBREAK: “I worked under him in the same way I worked under [Gen. Roy] Cimatu, [Gen. Efren] Abu, [Lt. Gen. Hermogenes] Esperon for sometime. It’s all a professional relationship and nothing more.”

Maclang is one of a number of

active and retired police and military officers living at the disputed JUSMAG property in Fort Bonifacio.

On the other hand, Calderon is described by Navy spokesman Capt. Geronimo Malabanan as “one of the best in his class...a straightforward person.”

Calderon is an old-timer at ISAFP, where he once served as commander of the controversial Military Intelligence Group (MIG) 21, the particular ISAFP unit said to have done the wiretapping on President Arroyo and Garcillano during the canvassing of the May 2004 polls. A former ISAFP associate says Calderon is a professional officer.

Calderon is said to be a distant relative of the President, an affinity that observers say was a factor in his being appointed as Ms. Arroyo’s senior military aide before being named ISAFP chief.

Maclang’s and Calderon’s assumption as top intelligence officers come at a time when the intelligence community is under public scrutiny for the crisis generated by the “Hello, Garci” tapped conversations.

Can these two officers stem the tide of public opinion against their department and salvage whatever is left of its credibility? ■

**There was an intelligence summit in 2002. The conclusion was: there were institutional and behavioral weaknesses in the intelligence community.**

**Maclang:** We’re looking at the doctrine because it will tell you what equipment is needed and how you will operate, what kinds of persons are needed.

**So, what’s the doctrine? Do you have one?**

**Maclang:** We have one but it’s antiquated. The last doctrine was crafted in 1978.

**What processes should be done to insulate the AFP from outside intervention?**

**Calderon:** I started with basic things: value formation as part of the discipline. The values of honesty, integrity have

been perhaps forgotten. Slowly, subliminally, the values will be absorbed. And every Saturday, just like any other military unit, they’re not excused from inspection. They may have forgotten to wear uniforms because intelligence operatives wear civilian clothes.

**So it’s back to basics.**

**Calderon:** Yes, to maintain military discipline and bearing. They shouldn’t feel that they’re shedding off their military uniform.

**How much weight do you give to open sources?**

**Maclang:** We need to improve our production capability, the analysis aspect. We want to do this AFP-wide. We have raw information that needs to be analyzed well. But we don’t have enough money to pay researchers.

**Other units sometimes criticize ISAFP for taking part in raids.**

**Calderon:** We have a mandate to do counteraction. For example, if we had an intelligence buildup on a suspected terrorist and we suddenly spotted him in one area, we need not wait for other units to come in before arresting him.

**It seems that there’s rivalry among intelligence units involved in the counter-terror campaign.**

**Calderon:** There’s no rivalry, there’s intelligence sharing. In crucial operations, all intelligence units are usually involved.

**Maclang:** As J2, I should not be commanding a task force because I am a staff officer. The operating task is with ISAFP and all the support should be given to them.

**What are the things that you want to accomplish during your term?**

**Calderon:** Instill values, discipline, upgrade equipment and capability.

**Maclang:** I should be able to provide timely, accurate, and relevant intelligence to the commanders. How do I achieve that? By being focused and forward-looking. I have observed that in the major service commands, the focus is human intelligence. Technical intelligence has been neglected. In the case of the Air Force, for example, the ideal situation is to have aerial reconnaissance capability. The Navy should have the same intelligence capability that hinges on its core competence.

**Calderon:** [To be able to achieve that] they need equipment: vessels for the Navy, aircraft for the Air Force. ■



JAY DIRECTO/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

# THE POLITICAL AGENT

Rather than administer justice, Raul Gonzalez is using the DOJ to get back at the President's enemies

By ISAGANI DE CASTRO JR.

**I**N A Cabinet meeting where a possible raid on the opposition newspaper *Daily Tribune* was being discussed, presidential chief of staff Michael Defensor reportedly cautioned his colleagues that touching the media in a state of emergency just because it had been critical of the administration would reflect badly on the President.

The raid was conducted, anyway, our sources say, because Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez Sr. reportedly quipped: "*Eh tinitira nila ako eh.* (But they've been hitting me.)"

A lot has apparently changed about the former anti-Marcos activist and human rights lawyer, who's now 75. During martial law, Gonzalez was also charged with inciting to sedition as a columnist in the opposition paper *We Forum*. He had questioned the authenticity of dictator Ferdinand Marcos's war medals.

Fellow human rights lawyer Rene Saguisag therefore urges Gonzalez to review his own experience before slapping administration critics with charges of inciting to sedition or rebellion. "He was fighting in a manner like Niñez [Cacho-Olivares, publisher and editor in chief of the *Daily Tri-*

*bune*], so he knows that if you keep hitting the powerful, there's no crime there."

The fourth justice secretary President Arroyo has appointed, Gonzalez may not have been as controversial as the first, Hernando Perez, who had to resign in 2002 over allegations of corruption.

The government's critics say that Gonzalez isn't fulfilling the DOJ's mission, which is to deliver effective, speedy, and compassionate justice. Since he assumed the post in September 2004, Gonzalez has issued controversial statements that either jeopardized ongoing investigations, enraged civil society groups, and appalled colleagues from the legal profession. (See sidebar.)

Lawyers' groups have found him to be such a "disgrace" to the legal profession that they are seeking his disbarment.

So where is Raul Gonzalez coming from?

A congressman of Iloilo City for nine years—Deputy House Speaker for the Visayas in his last term—the image he left in the public mind as lawmaker was that of chairman of the House panel in the committee that canvassed the votes for president and vice president in 2004. Despite merit

in the motions of the opposition to review the election returns from some provinces to prove that the certificates of canvass they were reading were tampered with in favor of President Arroyo, Gonzalez blocked them at every turn. His province also delivered the President's second biggest margin over Fernando Poe Jr.

Gonzalez's appointment as justice secretary was obviously a reward for his loyalty to the President. By all indications, it even intensified his loyalty. He's become the President's Attack Dog No. 1.

Members of Gabriela, a national women's alliance, staged a picket at the DOJ on March 28 to protest Gonzalez's "anti-women" statements. When Corazon Aquino called on Ms. Arroyo to resign, Gonzalez said Aquino shouldn't be meddling in national affairs when she couldn't even rein in her daughter Kris Aquino, a single mother who's had well-publicized affairs with married men. Gonzalez later apologized for his remark.

When Susan Rocas, widow of opposition leader Poe, remarked in a press conference that Ms. Arroyo stole the presidency twice, Gonzalez called Rocas a "gripping widow too beautiful to be jailed."

When the mother of the 22-year old Filipina who was allegedly raped by four American servicemen opposed his plan to exclude three out of the four suspects from the case, Gonzalez dismissed it as a mere "emotional outburst."

On several big cases, Gonzalez preempted the investigations being done by state prosecutors by giving his opinion before prosecutors could come out with their findings. They include the "Wowowee" stampede, the arrest of former Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman for illegal assembly, the alleged diversion of Bayan Muna representatives' congressional funds to the New People's Army, and the Subic rape case.

Political analyst Tony Gatmaitan says that the flak being received by Gonzalez "goes with the times" since President Arroyo is "under siege." He thinks a justice secretary can be more independent in a less troubled presidency. Gatmaitan recalls that during the Aquino presidency, then Justice Secretary Franklin Drilon was also controversial for filing a crime of rebellion with murder against alleged coup plotters.

The public interest law group Counsels for the Defense of Liberties (CODAL) and two other law groups said they would ask the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) to drop Gonzalez from the Roll of Attorneys for poor administration of justice and for placing the legal profession in "disgrace."

They said Gonzalez violated laws, rules,



and procedures by preempting and prejudging cases being deliberated at the DOJ and for violating the right to due process. Gonzalez allegedly violated a provision in the Rules of Court which urges lawyers to “abstain from all offensive personality and to advance no fact prejudicial to the honor and reputation of a party or witness.” They claimed that Gonzalez violated the lawyer’s code of ethics barring lawyers from “issuing statements in the media regarding a pending case tending to arouse public opinion for or against a party.”

“The DOJ, even for purposes of filing criminal cases, exists to protect the public from unjust prosecutions and also to protect the government, because an unjust prosecution will result in wastage of public funds,” Harry Roque, a professor at the UP College of Law, told NEWSBREAK.

In response, Gonzalez said he wouldn’t get a fair hearing before the IBP since its president, Jose Anselmo Cadiz, is part of the opposition. The IBP has, in fact, opposed his confirmation before the Commission on Appointments, alleging that Gonzalez sought to remove a P20-million state subsidy that the IBP uses to provide free legal services to poor litigants. Gonzalez denied the charge.

Gonzalez is actually just being true to form.

In 1988, then Tanodbayan (since called Ombudsman) Gonzalez was suspended by the Supreme Court (SC) from practicing law for issuing statements that put justices of the high court in a bad light. He claimed the SC stopped him from investigating “protégés or friends” of the justices. He accused six members of the SC, then headed by Chief Justice

**During martial law, Gonzalez was also charged with inciting to sedition as a columnist in the opposition paper *We Forum*.**

Marcelo Fernan, of trying to influence pending cases with the Tanodbayan and of foiling his investigation of illegal and embarrassing disbursements of the bench. He also accused the SC of dismissing trial court judges “without rhyme or reason” and for disbaring lawyers “without due process.”

In its October 1988 decision, the SC belied Gonzalez’s allegations and said his statements “clearly constitute contempt and call for the exercise of the disciplinary authority of the SC.” It said Gonzalez’s remarks “constitute the grossest kind of disrespect for the Court” and that “such statements very clearly debase and degrade the Supreme Court and, through the Court, the entire system of administration of justice in the country.” The SC unanimously voted to suspend Gonzalez from practicing law indefinitely.

Roque says Gonzalez is the only person to hold the post of justice secretary “despite the fact that he was previously suspended indefinitely by the SC.” In 1993, Gonzalez asked the SC to lift his suspension. He cited his “long record in the service of human rights and the rule of law” during the martial law years. He said his suspension for 51 months “has been the longest in Philippine legal annals.”

The SC, then headed by Chief Justice Andres Narvasa, unanimously lifted his suspension in April 1993.

Looking back at his suspension, Gonzalez said in a 1999 interview that it was the late Chief Justice Fernan who had wanted him to lay off Antique Gov. Zaldivar. He said the SC used the Zaldivar case to “clip the powers” of the Tanodbayan so that he could not pursue a Commission on Audit report that showed that SC funds were used to buy ladies’ underwear, flowers, and groceries. “This was the beginning of all the SC resolutions saying that members of the court cannot be investigated unless they are impeached,” he said.

Saguisag said that “to be fair to Raul, from Day 1 [of martial law], *nanindigan ‘yan eh* (he stood his ground). When it was dangerous, he was there. I say that with sadness.” He told NEWSBREAK that Gonzalez’s suspension by the SC “should not be taken against him” since it resulted from an attempt to go after powerful interests in society.

Ultimately, Roque said the blame should go to President Arroyo for appointing Gonzalez to the DOJ. “Although you cannot completely separate a Cabinet appointment from political considerations, still, you should at least appoint someone who will be able to enforce not only the laws but also the procedure and prevent wastage of government resources as well as avoid embarrassment for your President,” he said.

Roque said that unlike Gonzalez, previous justice secretaries “concentrated more on the functions of the office rather than acting as a political agent.” ■

# GRASSROOTS GRAFT-BUSTING

## Undermanned, the Ombudsman will train barangay officials on how to spot misuse of public funds

By **ARIES RUFO**

**I**N THE next few months, the Office of the Ombudsman will undertake one of its most innovative campaigns to lick corruption. The agency will embark on a “road show” that will take it to the country’s farthest reaches.

The idea is to “network” with barangay officials and train them in the nuances in the procurement and disbursement of public funds for local projects.

Assistant Ombudsman Mark Jalandoni says that most barangay officials are un-

aware of the intricacies surrounding public projects. The plan, he adds, is to enable barangay officials to spot possible irregularities and anomalies in the use of public funds.

Enlisting public support in the fight against corruption has shifted to high gear, an initiative that former Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo began. Before Marcelo, the Ombudsman’s main task was prosecuting erring officials—but this was severely undermined by the lack of resources.

Faced with this problem when he came on board, Marcelo sought more funding. He was able to secure a 2.9 million-euro



LUIS LIWANAG

grant from the European Union for an anti-corruption prevention program.

Citing health reasons, Marcelo resigned even before his programs could fully take off. The new Ombudsman, Mercedes Gutierrez, told NEWSBREAK in a recent interview that her immediate goal was to reduce corruption to an acceptable level and ultimately eliminate it. It's a herculean task.

In a recent talk with journalists, Assistant Ombudsman Cyril Ramos complained that the Ombudsman, reputed to be the most powerful office next to the Office of the President, "is only powerful on paper."

The "protector of the people," as the Constitution describes the anti-graft body, is in reality a paper tiger; "considering its disabling lack of resources to fulfill its mandate," Ramos added.

When Marcelo assumed office in 2003, he likened the Ombudsman to a "five-star general with only five soldiers, hunting crocodiles armed only with flyswatters."

The analogy arose from the fact that the Ombudsman is getting a measly share of the national budget.

In 2002, its budget was P458 million, less than half of 1 percent of the national budget that year. The minuscule budget allotted year after year has taken its toll on the Ombudsman's main task of going after erring public officials.

In 2003, the Ombudsman's budget even got smaller with only P392 million for its entire operation. But in 2004, its budget rose to P480 million and to P647 million in 2005.

Financially strapped, the agency could hire only 32 prosecutors and 37 field investigators nationwide. Each prosecutor handles about 2,000 cases while each field investigator has to monitor 17,241 public servants.

The disparity in the ratio has caused a heavy workload for prosecutors and investigators, resulting in slow-moving cases and investigations.

For a team already undermanned and underpaid, things often get worse because of the lack of training programs for prosecutors and investigators, in turn due to lack of money, Ramos explained.

Tony Kwok, former head of the Hong-kong-based International Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and now a consultant for the European Union-funded anti-corruption program of the Ombudsman, said the Ombudsman's small budget is one of the major reasons why corruption in the country goes unabated.

Without adequate resources, the Om-

budsman cannot function effectively and go after grafters, he said.

Citing Hong Kong's experience as a hotbed of corruption the 1960s and 1970s, Kwok said anti-corruption efforts went full-blast because these were properly funded.

Compared with the Ombudsman which has only a few dozen investigators, ICAC maintains an army of 837 field investigators with a ratio of 1:208.

With a budget of US\$90 million (P4.94 billion) as of 2004, ICAC staffers are among the highest paid government officials in HK, attracting the best personnel.

Kwok said that with "adequate resources and a professional staff," the Ombudsman can make a dent in corruption "in one or two years."

Kwok is pleased that the government has increased the proposed allocation for the Ombudsman to P935 million which would enable it to hire an additional 200 field investigators.

"If this is implemented, we can see some positive results," he said.

Aside from resources, the Ombudsman is also beset by an image problem: that of an ineffective, slow-moving agency.

**The Ombudsman is only powerful on paper.**  
—ASSISTANT OMBUDSMAN CYRIL RAMOS

While Marcelo was able to improve the agency's conviction rate to 40 percent, from only around a 10-percent conviction rate before him, the records were not impressive.

Ramos admits that the Ombudsman has a perception problem which may partly explain why public officials commit corruption with wanton abandon. Perception-based surveys reflect this.

Through no fault of the agency, perception-based surveys show that corruption in the Philippines is one of the worst in this part of the region.

For instance, the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC), in its 2005 report, rated the Philippines as the second most corrupt nation, next to Indonesia, among 12 Asian countries surveyed.

In its report, PERC noted that "the Philippine government is doing nothing about corruption and there has been no improvement in the problem of corruption."

Kwok said the general impression that corruption goes unpunished has a numbing effect on the public which may explain why many are indifferent to helping government fight it.

He said the same problem persisted in Hong Kong before, but they were able to

change public apathy towards, corruption by promoting the corporate image of ICAC as an effective agency.

One way to improve the image of the Ombudsman is to tap the media in disseminating information on anti-corruption efforts and achievements. This, he said, will deter corruption.

Amid the challenges, a bright note remains in the anti-corruption campaign that could prove enduring.

Its secret weapon, which is already creating impact, is its collaboration with various sectors in going after grafters and preventing corruption.

A partnership with the Inter-agency Anti-Graft Coordinating Council gave rise to lifestyle probes that have already caused the dismissal of 19 government employees, including a Bureau of Internal Revenue assistant commissioner and four internal revenue and customs examiners.

Its tie-up with the Anti-Money Laundering Council netted Maj. General Carlos Garcia, who is now facing plunder charges before the Sandiganbayan.

Aside from plunder, Garcia is facing two cases of forfeiture of unlawfully acquired properties.

The Garcia case led the Ombudsman to go after another military official, Lt. General Jacinto Ligot Jr., who is facing charges of unexplained wealth.

The Ombudsman also has tie-ups with the Philippine Bar Association and the Coalition against Corruption.

As for corruption prevention, the agency has partnered with the Government-Watch of Ateneo School of Government, the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts, and the Department of Education on textbook monitoring.

The immediate result of this partnership caused the reduction of textbook costs by 50 percent.

In one instance, 100,000 textbooks were rejected because these were found to be substandard.

The Ombudsman's partnership with the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Governance, a non-government organization, caused the replacement of a 4.6-kilometer road after it was found to be made of inferior materials.

Under Gutierrez, this collaboration with various sectors is expected to be strengthened as she enlists the help of various government agencies and NGOs in drafting a national anti-corruption plan.

Gutierrez said this would be the first time that the country would have a national roadmap in combating corruption. ■



# THE OUTSTANDING

# 6

*To inspire people to change their communities, they need to hear the stories of these local executives—again*



IF DAVID Osborne and Ted Gaebler were to write a Philippine edition of *Reinventing Government*, the bible of innovative and entrepreneurial public administrators, more than half of the cases they will cite will come from the governor and mayors that we have in this issue. The rest will be provided by the emerging leaders from the countryside who, we'd like to think, had been inspired by what these pioneers have achieved.

Let's not say we've heard enough of Josie dela Cruz, Jesse Robredo, Sonny Belmonte, Mary Jane Ortega, Francis Tolentino, and Rudy Duterte. If this country is to move forward, then the push will come from the local governments. If the people are to be inspired to do something for their community, then they will have to look up to the leaders closest to them. If we are to prove that such inspiring leaders are not rare or are flashes in the pan, then we will have to tell the stories of these six again and again.

What made the Outstanding 6 excel? We see from their stories that from the beginning, each of them had honest intentions: to serve and change things for the better. The intentions resulted in management plans and strategies that would be the envy of corporate executives. And what's reassuring is that they've entrenched their most successful programs that their successors would be left with no choice but to sustain them.

How did they not lose sight after several elections and countless recognitions? Clearly, they've nurtured those honest intentions.

A lot of people are asking if these model local executives would care to carry to the Senate their good intentions, real intelligence, sensible methods, even their stubbornness on what they know is best. With the polls a year away, and with most of them reaching the constitutional limit on reelection, they are asked this question with increasing frequency.

They haven't decided on higher office, they say. They are the type, however, who would know what do—and will do it—once they are there.

—Miriam Grace A. Go



## NAGA CITY UNDER JESSE ROBREDO

■ **IMPROVED EDUCATION SERVICES.** Revitalizing and empowered local school board led to the increase in the passing rate of students in national achievement tests, from 38.15 percent in the school year 2002-2003, to 50.62 percent in 2003-2004.

■ **INCREASED ANNUAL LOCAL REVENUES,** from P13 million in 1988 to P132 million in 2002.



■ **PHENOMENAL ECONOMIC GROWTH,** averaging 6.5 percent annually from 1993 to 1998—significantly higher than the growth posted by the national economy. Three new banks open every two years, a new subdivision opens every year, and Internet service providers increase by 91 percent every year.

■ **REDUCED COSTS** through transparent transactions under the i-Governance program. City government was able to reduce the costs of road construction by 42 percent, medicine by 70 percent, and supplies by 33 percent.

■ **HIGHER ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME.** Mainly due to develop-

ments in local economy and increased investments, the average annual family income (at P174,500) of Nagueños is 126 percent higher than the average family in the greater Bicol region, and 42 percent higher than the national average.



## QUEZON CITY UNDER FELICIANO BELMONTE

■ **STREAMLINED BUREAUCRACY.** He dropped 3,000 casual and ghost employees from the roll of 12,000. The city government got to save 32 percent on its operating cost.

■ **DEFICIT TURNED TO SURPLUS.** From a deficit of about P600,000 in 1999, it posted a P2.2-billion budget surplus in 2002. The city is now running on a P5 million annual budget.

■ **INCREASED TAX COLLECTIONS.** In Belmonte's first three years as mayor, the collection of business taxes jumped by almost 160 percent, and real property tax collection reached P120 million.

■ **JUVENILE JUSTICE ADDRESSED.** The city raised to P7 million the budget for the Molave Youth Home, where they rehabilitate youth offenders instead of putting them in jail with hardened criminals.

■ **POOR GETS MEDICAL SERVICES.** A P5.4-million trust fund has been set up with nine hospitals for the SB Medical Care Program. It has made possible the treatment of 25,000 indigents so far.



## BULACAN UNDER JOSEFINA DELA CRUZ

■ **IMPROVED EDUCATION SERVICES.** The provincial government introduced Project Josie, or Joint Improvement in Education, and raised its National Education Achievement Test average from 2000 to 2003. It required a funding of P35 million from the provincial government and grants.

■ **RETOOLED BUREAUCRACY.** Laid off 400 unqualified or redundant capitol employees and increased the salaries of qualified career employees.

■ **IMPROVED COLLECTIONS.** The computerization of the provincial government's operations increased the tax and fees collections from 52 percent to 72 percent.

■ **EMPOWERED BARANGAYS.** Dela Cruz has involved barangay captains in collecting real property taxes (RPT). In return, the barangays get 25 percent of the RPT collected in their area.

■ **SAFE AND PEACEFUL.** The province enjoys a crime solution efficiency of 93 percent.



## TAGAYTAY CITY UNDER FRANCIS TOLENTINO

■ **CITY EMPLOYEES GET INSURANCE.** The city introduced the Green Card for city workers in 1995, long before the national government introduced Philhealth. It entitles the bearer to basic services, such as medical care and education at subsidized rates. The card ensures that migrant workers do not drain the budget for basic services intended for its main constituents.

■ **INCREASED LOCAL INCOME.** Primarily because of the city government's business ventures, its budget grew from P100 million in 1994 to P5 billion in 2005.

■ **TOURISM GOT A BOOST.** The local government got the Tagaytay Tourism Council, a group of private businesses, to help it promote the city as a major tourist destination without destroying the environment.

■ **PARTNERED WITH PRIVATE SECTOR.** City hall got loans and promotional assistance from private organizations to finance the construction of a state-of-the-art convention center and hotels that now contribute to the city's income.



## DAVAO CITY UNDER RODRIGO DUTERTE

■ **INVESTMENTS SOARED,** from P62 billion in 2000 to P118.5 billion in 2004.

■ **SAFE, REALLY SAFE.** It has a crime solution efficiency rate of 93 percent.

■ **INCREASED TAX COLLECTION.** In 2003, the city government exceeded its tax collection target by P35 million. In 2004, its collection increased by P290 million.

■ **EMPOWERED WOMEN.** The city passed a Women Development Code, has reserved seats for women representatives in the council, and allots 6 percent of the agricultural development fund, 30 percent of the official development assistance fund, and 5 percent of general fund to women's programs. The city also established the Davao Medica Center, which has a women and children protection unit, a one-stop family crisis intervention center and the Child Minding Center, a day-care center for LGU employees.

PHOTOGRAPHS—LUIS LIWANAG; PAUL MATA (ROBREDO); SKIPPY LUMAWAG (DUTERTE)

## SAN FERNANDO CITY UNDER MARY JANE ORTEGA

■ **REDUCED NUMBER OF SQUATTERS.** In 1998, informal settlers accounted for 27 percent of households in the city. It was reduced to 5 percent in 2003.

■ **MODEL IN WASTE MANAGEMENT.** The World Bank promotes San Fernando's engineered sanitary landfill as a model for local governments in other countries.

■ **PREPARED FOR DISASTERS.** The city did a hydro-geological study that pinpointed the areas that will be prone to damage should an earthquake occur.

■ **FISHERMEN GET OWN HOUSES.** The Fishermen's Village is being developed to give fishing families that had been squatting for 50 years their own houses. Twenty-eight of the target 97 houses have been built so far.

■ **SOCIAL SERVICES PRIORITIZED.** San Fernando has been recognized for its programs for the rehabilitation of street children, mentally-deranged people, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities. It has a continuing feeding program for malnourished children, built lying-in clinics in remote villages and additional daycare centers.

■ **MOTHERS AND FARMERS GET EDUCATION.** Mothers are given lessons on how to properly care for their children, while farmers are taught modern technologies in agriculture.





IF I WERE  
PRESIDENT

Every child will  
be in school and  
every family will  
be an economic  
enterprise



## THE FAMILY WOMAN

For every program, Josefina dela Cruz asked: will this strengthen the Bulakeño family?

By BOOMA CRUZ

**F**AMILY—HER biological family—played the biggest role in **Josefina dela Cruz's** first campaign for public office in 1980 (she was single then and carried the surname Mendoza). She was included in the KBL's council ticket in Bocaue, Bulacan, at the last minute because the original candidate backed out. Somebody in the party remembered hearing her on the street telling her friends, "*Gusto kong kumandidato* (I want to be a candidate)."

She topped the elections. And why not? Her grandmother was an active parishioner who raised funds for the construction of the Catholic cathedral in their area. Her mother was superintendent of public schools, and her father ran a store of agricultural supplies that catered to farmers even outside their town.

Twenty-seven years later, Dela Cruz, the first woman governor of Bulacan, is acknowledged by various institutions as one of the country's best local executives. This is primarily because of her programs that address concerns closest to the heart of any family: health, education, livelihood.

Although she undertakes infrastructure projects—Bulacan is a commercial hub—the governor invests more in projects with an immediate impact on the lives of people. "My projects are aimed at strengthening the family."

Her population development program, for instance, has been acknowledged by no less than the Population Commission and Malacañang. She creates awareness and muster support for programs like this by networking with households, through the mothers and the youth. "My programs are sectoral,

not geographic, so I cut through boundaries."

For example, Bulacan is the only province with a youth department. Training future leaders has been one of her passions since her teens, when she was active in civic work. In fact, she was, along with Sen. Francis Pangilinan, one of the founders of the National Movement of Young Legislators.

The Asian Institute of Management, Local Government Academy, and Ford Foundation recognized her constituent-responsive governance with the Gawad Galing Pook in 2002.

The same award, which recognizes the best practices in local governance, was given her administration for "reinventing public service" in July 2000. Such transformation of the way a province of more than two million people is run wasn't done overnight. It was a continuing work with five end goals:

- Transparency and accountability by computerizing transactions and processes.
- Sustainable economic development.
- Efficient delivery of health and social services.
- Peace and order.

Bulacan has also been chosen by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry as the Most Business-Friendly LGU, a big boost to the province of many small and medium-scale enterprises. Dela Cruz subscribes to the trade department's one-town-one-product campaign.

Dela Cruz says she accomplished all this because she surrounded herself with young achievers—honor graduates from leading universities in the country. They do complete staff work for the governor, who heaps praises for a good job and minces no words for sloppy work.

"Change management will require a core group of champions," says Dela Cruz, a management engineering graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University.

Now on her last term as governor, she believes she and her staff of "champions" have institutionalized efficiency and responsiveness at the capitol, so there will be no sliding back for Bulacan when she's gone.

Some quarters are egging her to run for senator—she's got name recall (but, she concedes, not as much as the *artistas* or controversial figures), and she comes from huge clans: Roxas, Mendoza, Dela Cruz.

She's weighing her options carefully. For one, she has always believed that the country's progress depends on the performance of the local governments. "That's why I didn't run for Congress before. Given a choice, I'd rather be in the Cabinet, make a difference in a department."

For another, she and her husband of almost 25 years have just separated officially. "It will take a man who's very secure of himself to be married to somebody like me," she says. Her not being together with her husband is something that Bulakeños didn't take against her in past elections, but she needs to know if the national electorate is ready for that.

Projecting family togetherness "might be good for politics, but it's not healthy for my children emotionally."

That's a mom—and outstanding public official—speaking. With honesty. Can the voting public afford to lose her? —**with a report from Miriam Grace A. Go**



### TIPS FOR PUBLIC MANAGERS

- Have a vision and prepare a road map.
- Learn to listen and be willing to adjust your plan accordingly.
- When in doubt, just do what is right.

# TO LEAD A WILLING PEOPLE

Jesse Robredo involved his constituents in policymaking, and they liked the idea

By GEMMA B. BAGAYAU

IS THERE anything new to write about **Jesse Robredo**? Or Naga City?

In the 15 years that he has been mayor (with only a break of three years from 1998 to 2001), every innovation he introduced in every aspect of governance in Naga has earned national and international awards—140 and counting. Robredo, in fact, has earned the award that would top 'em all—the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Government Service, the Asian equivalent of the Nobel.

Yet outsiders remain curious: What makes local governance in Naga City the most ideal in the country?

“You haven’t written about the people of Naga,” Robredo told **NEWSBREAK** after he delivered a talk on transparency months ago. His role, he said, is to come up with an idea and make his constituents realize that they have stakes in whatever issue he wants to address, service he wants to improve, and sector he wants to reform. Then they pick up—and keep the program going.

The value he accords people was immediately evident in his first term (he was elected in 1988 at age 29). He allowed representatives of basic sectors and legitimate non-government organizations to sit in the city council. They took part in the deliberation, conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of programs and projects.

Naga was doing it way before the Local Government Code that would require LGUs to allot certain seats for sectoral representatives in the council was passed in 1991.

The city has been elevated to the Hall of Fame in the Asian Institute of Management’s Galing Pook Awards. In 1999, Naga was cited by *Asiaweek* as one of the Most Improved Cities in Asia. Consistently, Naga under Robredo has been cited as one of the most investor-friendly cities.

These days, Robredo is in demand in forums, where he talks about Naga’s i-Governance program to admiring audiences. I-Governance is about making all the services, contracts, transactions, collection, names of accountable officials and employees of the city available to the public, whether online (through [www.naga.gov.ph](http://www.naga.gov.ph)) that has earned international recog-

## TIPS FOR PUBLIC MANAGERS

- Be willing and committed to change the way things are run at the local level.
- Ensure transparency and accountability in local processes and projects.
- Engage your constituents and get them involved. They are key ingredients towards achieving better program outcomes.



nition) or in print (through a directory of sorts that the city government publishes and gives to all the households and establishments in Naga for free, and which is regularly updated).

I-Governance was chosen as one of the Global 107 Best Practices at the 2004 Dubai International Awards. The city was also a recipient of the United Nations Public Service Awards for applying information and communications technology in governance.

An engineer, Robredo imbibed this innovative streak from his experience as a corporate executive before he joined politics after EDSA 1. He obtained a Master’s in Public Administration at the John F. Kennedy School of Government in Harvard in 1999.

The bottom line, however, is integrity. Robredo won as mayor the first time with the help of his uncle, then Gov. Luis Villafuerte of Camarines Sur. When the old man started sending him documents to sign as if he were a rubber stamp, Robredo broke away. “I am not comfortable with provincial politics,” he confessed.

It’s come to a point when people begin to wonder why—for all the glory and honors conferred on him—the mayor hasn’t spread his political wings beyond Naga. Robredo’s answer: “I am more comfortable at the local level, where you immediately see the results of your labors, where you have clear limitations.”

Robredo was one of the staunchest supporters of the late Raul Roco in the latter’s bid for the presidency in 1998 and 2004. These choices did not endear him to the present administration. (Robredo used to chair the Bicol Regional Development Council. Now, his cousin, Gov. Luis Rey Villafuerte, does). Robredo has since aligned himself with the Drilon wing of the Liberal Party. “I am confident that I will be on the right side of history,” he said.

—with a report from **Miriam Grace A. Go**



IF I WERE PRESIDENT

**I will drastically change the allocation of government resources to favor local governments. I will make LGU leaders more accountable to their constituents in a measurable way.**







#### TIPS FOR PUBLIC MANAGERS

- Earn more, spend less.
- Buy only what is needed.
- Hands-on management.



## CORPORATE MAN

Feliciano Belmonte turned a bankrupt Quezon City into the country's richest local government unit

By RUDY LORENZO

IF I WERE PRESIDENT  
There will be less politics

**Q**UEZON CITY Mayor **Feliciano Belmonte Jr.** sorts out folders of documents on his table and pulls out a computer printout that details the tax collection and the business and occupational permits issued by the city government the previous day.

"The first thing I read when I enter the office is the treasurer's report. With this computer print out, I have an idea how we are doing," Belmonte said.

He is in high spirits. The city collection is on track and so far its money in hand and in banks is over P5 billion. The Commission on Audit has ranked Quezon City as the richest city in the Philippines for three consecutive years now. (However, some local government units are questioning the ranking because the assets considered included its P1-billion internal revenue allotment, which doesn't need effort to collect.)

But five years ago when he took over from Ismael Mathay Jr. who had ruled the city for more than a decade, reading a similar report dismayed Belmonte. He inherited an empty treasury—a cash balance of P10 million meant little against a budgetary deficit of P1 billion and over P2 billion in debts and overdue bank loans.

"Sonny," as close friends and supporters call him, is no stranger to financial crises.

Belmonte, who initially dreamed of becoming a priest, worked as a reporter for the *Manila Chronicle* while studying law at the Lyceum of the Philippines. His stint in public service began as a special assistant to

President Diosdado Macapagal in the early 1960s.

After the EDSA People Power Revolt of 1986, then President Corazon Aquino named him to several government-owned corporations that were on the brink of bankruptcy.

He became the president and general manager of the Government Service Insurance Corporation (GSIS) and the Manila Hotel, chairman of the National Reinsurance Corp., and president and chief executive officer of Philippine Airlines (PAL).

It was during his leadership that PAL registered an unprecedented profit of P 1.2 billion, enabling it to pay off its entire obligation without borrowing a single centavo or firing employees despite pressure from competition.

Belmonte entered politics as congressman of the 4<sup>th</sup> district of Quezon City. He served as Speaker of the House of Representatives before he became mayor in 2001.

The new mayor confronted the city's financial problems head on. His first move was not to renew the contract of some 7,000 casual and contractual employees, including 400 consultants. This produced savings of P126 million in the next six months.

"It was a very difficult decision because when I announced it during my inaugural speech most of those affected were right there in the crowd," he recalled.

Belmonte held back expenses in the first six months—no renovations were made on offices. He systemized expenditures and instituted drastic reforms in vital units, particularly in the assessment, treasury, and regulatory agencies. He improved efficiency and computerized operations.

In less than one year the city government erased its budget deficit and paid most of its outstanding debts. In the next four years, the city government welcomed students, financial managers, and political leaders who were eager to learn how Quezon City managed the financial turnaround.

In a span of five years under Belmonte, Quezon City has moved from being a financially distressed local government to one of the best managed, most business-friendly, and the richest city in the country.

"Everybody believes that Quezon City has changed for the better. I think there's a lot more to be done, particularly in addressing poverty," he said.

Belmonte doesn't encourage dole-outs and political patronage. He wants to make people self-reliant.

"I try to run Quezon City on corporate style and principles, limiting the influence of politics on decisions."

At 69, Mayor Belmonte wants to run again if there will be an election next year. He is eligible for another term. In 2010, he wants to hand down the leadership of the city to younger people.

"By that time I will be in my early 70s and I think I should not aspire beyond that."

However, with current political developments in the country, that may change. He may return to law-making, if and when we have a parliament in place by 2010. He stressed, however, that it's a "distant" possibility for him.

"Whatever changes at the national level," Belmonte said, "good local governance remains a must and is still my top priority." ■

# MAYOR JETSETTER

San Fernando's Mary Jane Ortega  
learns strategies abroad

By CARMELA FONBUENA

**A**N ABSENTEE mayor has been running San Fernando City since 1998. **Mary Jane Ortega**, 65, has no qualms disclosing that in her first term alone (1998 to 2001), she traveled 28 times abroad. That was at least nine trips every year. She recently came back from back-to-back trips to the US and Spain.

One must wonder what has become of San Fernando—in La Union, not Pampanga—under her remote-control administration. San Fernando is actually doing very well, thank you. One indication is that it has landed consistently on the Asian Institute of Management's (AIM) list of the Philippines' most competitive small cities.

World Bank activities usually keep the mayor away. The international organization has been giving technical assistance since 2000 to the city's development strategy (CDS)—a city road map “putting equal focus on governance, education, and environment.” For this, Ortega, a former professor of Spanish in college, is periodically invited to World Bank conferences as speaker to share San Fernando's development strategy with other local executives, or as a delegate to learn other strategies from them. Sometimes, it's the United Nations taking her time. Ortega has been a member of the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities since 2000.

The mayor makes up for the times she's away by working late in the city hall.

The city's good fortunes “all came from trash,” Ortega says, referring to its solid waste management project. Her concern for the environment started the city's partnership with the World Bank, which offered technical assistance to San Fernando's landfill project that Ortega promises to be operational before her term ends. The project involves expensive technology.

As the regional center of northern Luzon, the city gets its biggest pressure from the need for efficient solid waste management. Because of schools, offices, and hospitals serving the region, the city has an average of 50,000 visitors daily, each visitor contributing half a kilo of solid waste.

Mary Jane Ortega has always been an environmentalist. In the early 1990s, as the wife of then Rep. Victor Ortega (now the provincial governor) and as president of the city's Innerwheel Club, she put up a botanical garden. She kept her environmental commitment when she was elected mayor. “We don't want to be like other cities that neglect the environment for economic gains. They should go together.”

The city is now very popular for its environmental programs. Ortega was given the United Nations Habitat Scroll of Honor award in 2000 and is a consistent winner of the country's cleanest and greenest city award.

With only a year left in her third and last term, Ortega still took on a new commitment: an early warning device for disasters. This she picked up from the latest World Bank conference she attended. The city has already done a hydro-geological study, detecting the city's dangerous areas in case of an earthquake. She wants to “intensify” the efforts.

If there's one dream that Ortega may not realize in her term, it is the development of Poro Point, an international sea- and airport. It has been her dream since she became mayor. It was to open a casino last December, but the Philippine Amusement and Gam-



ing Corp. didn't grant it permit to operate. The city expected the casino to draw tourists—like in Fort Ilocandia in Laoag, Ilocos Norte—and boost the city economy.

What are her political plans for 2007?

“I won't run. There's no vacancy,” she says. For more than a century now, San Fernando has been ruled by the Ortegas—arguably the longest-running political dynasty in the country.

The incumbent governor and his brother, three-term Rep. Manuel Ortega, might swap offices in the next election. “I'm not part of the musical chairs,” Mayor Ortega says.

And whom does she trust to succeed her? This is a concern raised by the city's biggest benefactor, the World Bank. This will put San Fernando's city development strategy to a test.

“I am foremost a teacher,” she says. “I've worked on capacity building in the city hall. I'm confident that...the projects have been institutionalized. I am ready to go.” ■



IF I WERE  
PRESIDENT

**I would reach  
out to each one  
for genuine  
reconciliation**



#### TIPS FOR PUBLIC MANAGERS

- Capacity building for the staff is needed.
- You have to know a little of accounting and be transparent.
- Love your work.

## NO ORDINARY PRIVATE CITIZEN

Tagaytay is Tagaytay because of  
former Mayor Francis Tolentino



IF I WERE  
PRESIDENT

Governance  
would be  
anchored on  
compassion  
and  
discipline



By **CARMELA FONBUENA**

**T**WO YEARS after leaving Tagaytay City Hall where he served for a decade, former Mayor **Francis Tolentino** can say that he's happy with what he has done. And why not? It was during his term that the city turned into the tourism hub that it is now. He started with an annual city budget of P100 million in 1994 and left his successor with a half-billion-peso budget.

Now a private citizen, his lifestyle has changed dramatically. To be a mayor is a 24-hour call, he said. Guilty of micromanaging, he would sometimes find himself joining the police at midnight checkpoints. "It was exciting," he recalls. We've heard motorists and other travelers reminding themselves that in Tagaytay, unlike Metro Manila, the seat-belt law is strictly enforced.

The city hall was also open on Saturdays because of its unique constituency. Eighty percent of the city's taxpayers are Manila-based and can only attend to their tax duties on weekends. "You develop a style based on the needs of your people."

As an "ordinary private citizen, I have all the time to relax," he says. It's a much-deserved break, although his activities today are far from what ordinary private citizens would consider relaxing. He practices law and writes newspaper columns (he has written some of the best arguments on issues in local governance). He is preparing to launch a book, run a foundation, and join the military (his status as a full colonel in the reserved Philippine Army was approved by the Commission on Appointments on February 22).

In 2004, the camps of presidential candidates Fernando Poe Jr., Raul Roco, and Panfilo Lacson wooed

Tolentino to run for senator, but he refused. "I was not prepared then to swim in a bigger ocean." NEWS-BREAK at the time pointed out how ironic it was that Lakas, the party to which he had been very loyal, missed out on the promising young man and didn't consider him for its senatorial slate.

His focus was Tagaytay. "The real measure of a successful elected official is to have selected a successor and to have that successor embraced by the people. That means the idea of continuity is accepted by the electorate not just because of a personality based culture but because of performance."

His selected successor, brother Abraham, won by a landslide in the last election. With Abraham's victory, Francis feels assured that his projects will be "institutionalized," particularly the government-owned businesses.

Back when business was slow in Tagaytay, he took the initiative to put up hotels and resorts—Lake Garden Hotel, Mahogany Hotel, and Tagaytay Character Convention Hotel, among others—to prime the city's economy. "When investors do not dare because of risks involved...we cannot wait for [them] to come in. Government should be more daring, enterprising, and adventurous." The city also floated LGU bonds to finance its convention complex and lodging facility.

Tolentino's efforts worked, and private businesses followed. He also introduced unconventional policies. You would think that with its booming tourism, mall developers would rush to invest in Tagaytay. In fact, they did. But "it is not a priority of the city," Tolentino says. For example, SM did not pursue its mall in Tagaytay because its usual box-type format couldn't pass Tagaytay's building standards. Many find it a good move to preserve the city's attraction. They think that malls will make the city no different from Metro Manila.

Beer houses and KTV bars are banned in the city, too. "We want to keep [Tagaytay] wholesome. Many of the youth frequent Tagaytay," he said.

According to the Asian Institute of Management's 2003 survey, Tagaytay is the third most competitive small city in the country. Seventy percent of Tagaytay's income today is locally generated.

What's his next step?

Having proven himself as a city chief executive, Tolentino has the credentials to serve in any government department. His legal background can match, if not surpass, the qualifications of many in the legislative and judiciary departments. He finished law at the Ateneo de Manila University in 1984, practiced in New York for a while, and holds a certificate on public international law from the Hague Academy of International Law.

Tolentino is "excited" about his recent promotion in the military. "It's my current source of euphoria." He is interested in policymaking on issues like international terrorism and intelligence.

Asked if he plans to run for higher office in 2007, Tolentino says it's a "long way to go." It will be the government's loss if he decides to remain a private citizen. ■



### TIPS FOR PUBLIC MANAGERS

- Be a workaholic.
- Always consult with your constituency.
- Be transparent.



# DON'T MESS WITH HIM

Rodrigo Duterte tapped Davao's best minds to turn the city around

By JOWEL CANUDAY

**H**IS PERSONA is cut out from the movies: **Rodrigo Duterte** is the tough mayor in jeans and sunglasses who's merciless toward criminals and druggies but soft on people who bring their woes to him.

Yet, beneath that public image is a secure politician who doesn't cringe from unpopular decisions and who doesn't mind working with people who don't share his politics.

For smartly combing the old ways of politics and modern approaches to governance, the 61-year-old Duterte has made Davao the competitive city that it is today. It was ranked by *Asiaweek* for four consecutive years as the most livable city in the country.

Since becoming mayor of Davao City in 1988, Duterte has won all electoral contests by landslides that were preceded by the usual campaign dole-outs. When he ran for Congress in 1998, he handily won over his opponents. Three years later, he recaptured the city's mayoral post and got elected to the same post in 2004.

Duterte has impressed many, having turned a once-laggard bureaucracy into one that works efficiently.

In the Marcos years, business was lackluster in the city because it had become a hotbed of the communist insurgency. He turned it around in no time. Investments in the city continued to soar from P62 billion in

2000 to P118.5 billion in 2004, according to reports by the Asian Tourism Forum. The United States Virtual Consulate in Davao City notes that the local government staff "nurtures competitiveness with a high level of responsiveness" and facilitates "business-friendly initiatives." Duterte doesn't take all the credit; he says he has the residents and various sectors to thank for.

"I have leftists and rightists in my government," Duterte would tell reporters. At City Hall holding critical posts are former political detainees as well as retired police officers. Duterte took into his ticket Leftist city council bets in the 2001 and 2004 elections. The political slate he carried in both elections represented a cross section of society that included a gay, a women rights advocate, political activists, traders, professionals, and scions of traditional politicians and landed families in the city.

Duterte appointed deputy mayors for various Moro and Lumad ethno-linguistic groups. He provided them with resources and allowed them to resolve conflicts and other community-related issues through the combination of indigenous and state laws. The result is less, if not an absence of, community-related conflicts.

Patricia Ruivivar, the chief of staff of Duterte, said that the mayor's style attracts the city's brightest city-folk. For instance, the participation of women's rights activists and feminists in crafting a women development program in the city resulted in the legislation of a landmark Children's Welfare Code in 1994 and a Women's Development Code in 1997. These mainstreamed gender-sensitivity programs, ensured women's participation in various levels of local governance, and created service institutions such as the women's crisis institute and child minding centers.

The city government has not only provided financial support to the city's elementary and high schools but allotted about P10 million for the operation of 94 *madrasah* or elementary-level Arabic schools for Muslims.

Duterte doesn't even dip his hands in managing the city's day-to-day affairs; his staff does this for him. City Hall is run by clever and experienced people: a city administrator, a chief of staff, and a planning officer who have all been honed in the bureaucracy.

Duterte thus has time to look at the big picture, which makes it difficult to rattle him into making hasty decisions in the name of *realpolitik*. Even after President Arroyo, whom he considers an ally, issued orders restricting the holding of protest rallies, Duterte declared the city an "all-rally zone."

Still, Davao is not perfect and neither is its mayor. He has to put in place a more transparent process that would show how public funds are spent. He has constant run-ins with human rights activists, who accuse him of tolerating the summary killings of alleged drug users and pushers.

In 2002, Duterte said he was against dynasties. His father, the late Vicente Duterte, was governor of Davao province from 1959 to 1965, while his mother, Soledad Roa, was an anti-Marcos activist.

What if any of his children would like to be mayor, too? "Maybe when I'm dead and gone, it would be their turn to run." —*MindaNews*



IF HE WERE  
PRESIDENT

**He would have leftists, rightists, gays, women's rights advocates, traders—a cross-section of society—in his government**



SKIPPIY LUMAWAG



ABSURDIA | CARLA MONTEMAYOR

## opinion

# TELEBASURA\*

\* It means what it means, but it was coined by Spanish media scholars to refer to their TV junk. I went through our very own heap recently and here's what I found.

## EAT BULAGA AND WOWOWEE

These noontime shows have gotten to be so annoying, they make me nostalgic for *Germspatial* ("Germspecial" as pronounced by Kuya Germs). In "Germspecial," you at least had a host with microbes for a name. Then you had the Bellestar dancers, who wore costumes resembling culled fowl during an avian flu pandemic.

In "Eat Bulaga"/"Wowowee," all you get are nasty innuendos, gyrating girls, screaming hosts and inane games. We have had this kind of crap on TV for over two decades and we're surprised why the *masa* elects one of its buffoons as senator? Another two decades of this and we will have budget deliberations conducted as a game show:

Hon. Revillame: We will start with the 10-billion-peso budget under item number 454 of the General Appropriations Act. Secretary, *pera o bayong?* (Gallery yells *pera!* But the Secretary opts for *bayong*.)

Hon. Revillame: *Sigurado ka? Dadagdagan ko ng 2 billion ang budget mo.*

Secretary (very nervous): *Bayong!*

Hon. Revillame: *At ang laman ng bayong ay... tatlong buto ng chico.* Sorry, Department of Agriculture, your budget is gone and you will have to make do with the seeds for your operational requirements.

## ETHERIA

*Fantaseryes* are the big thing, I see. I saw several episodes of "Etheria" when I was home last Christmas. It's a big production (for TV) and I detected an effort at developing a plot: I tuned in a few times and was unable to deduce the story line. The downside: it is obviously a rip-off from Western fantasy genres. The *diwatas* in "Etheria" look like Xena, the warrior princess (without the abs). Isn't a *diwata* in Tagalog mythology a creature like Maria Makiling? And why do

some of the actors say their lines in classic Tagalog but with colloquial accents?

## GULONG NG PALAD

I cannot believe they're resurrecting this relic. In case you are fortunate enough to have amnesia, let me remind you: it's a soap from the 1970s, starring Marianne de la Riva, Ronald Corveau, Caridad Sanchez, Augusto Vicky, and Romnick Sarmenta. It's probably the most tired plot for soaps the world over: rich boy, poor girl, fireworks between families.

Suggested modern touches: 1) Caridad Sanchez should play Luisa, the lead character. And why not? Why should nubile ingénues always be the romantic leads in soaps? Why not senior actresses who can really act? 2) I don't want to see any more slapping scenes, please. Train the cast to execute helicopter kicks. The show will then be known as a *karateleserye*. 3) Change the title. "Gulong ng Palad" is too old-fashioned for the modern audience. Make it "Gulong ng Bulldozer." Why bother with subtlety when the entire show is a cliché?

## KOREANOVELA

Korean movies are getting better and better. Last year I saw *Untold Scandal*, an adaptation of *Dangerous Liaisons*, and *Oldboy*, an ultra-violent revenge story. Both were brilliant and we should import these from Korea. The biggest obstacle, however, would be our silly censorship system that allows mindless junk to saturate the minds of TV

audiences of all ages, but bars adults from watching challenging films which happen to have sexual and violent content.

Violence? Did you say violence? Let's not poison our peaceful islands with that! And sex? Please, we are Catholics. It's only by the grace of God that there are now 84 million of us.

## PINOY BIG BROTHER

In what dimension of Philippine reality do 12 people share a spacious home in the Timog area without half of them being maids? Only in this ridiculous show. Elsewhere in the country, dozens of people squeeze into hovels under bridges and in crumbling dormitories in Sampaloc. Stick a camera in those places and you'd get more action.

You know what would be more interesting? A family-based reality show like "The Osbournes." Working title: "Duel in the Palace."

(INT. Family is having lunch.)

Mother (to husband who is stuffing his face): *Masyado kang masiba! Sinisira mo ang career ko!*

Son: Mommy, *hayaan mo na si Dad. Bigyan mo na lang ako ng mas maraming pork.*

Mother: *Isa ka pa. Mga %\$#\* kayo! Puro kayo konsumisyon!*

Daughter: Mommy, don't get mad *na*, focus on your work *na lang*.

Son (to sister): *Sipsip! 'Kala mo kung sinong matalino.*

Daughter: Well, I'm really *matalino* and my kids will be *matalino* because I'm not going to marry my cousin.

(Kids attack each other. Aide comes in.)

Aide: Ma'am, we have a crisis. *Lumabas jung mga tape.*

Mother: %^\$#! How did that happen? I micro-managed the whole thing!

Aide: They're asking you to resign.

Mother: %\$#\*& mga jologs yan! Ang mga may class na katulad ko, nunca magre-resign!

Swearing, violence, incest, questionable values. What more would you want in a reality show? ■

Our silly censorship system allows junk to saturate the minds of TV audiences of all ages





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# WITH HONORS?

Some marketing and product awards can be “won” for a fee

By ALEXANDER BONILLA

**A**S PUBLIC relations manager of a five-star hotel in Roxas Boulevard, Regina Kabigting has become cynical about letters from various organizations informing her that their hotel has won a special award. She’s had a series of telling experiences with these supposedly survey-based recognitions.

“Although many are legit, others seem suspicious,” Kabigting told NEWSBREAK. “When I asked them what hotel category we won the award for, they couldn’t answer. Then I received another fax from the same group asking for a sponsorship fee. When I told them no, they withdrew the award.”

Summit Media publisher Lisa Gokongwei had a similar experience: “They faxed us a letter informing us that our magazine had won an award for best men’s magazine. After initial discussions on the phone, they faxed us another letter asking us for sponsorship for media mileage and other things. When we declined to give sponsorship, they withdrew the award. A month or so later, I found out that the same award had been given to our competitor.”

Bogus marketing-related award-giving bodies have proliferated in recent years. Mylene Sason, chairman of the 26<sup>th</sup> Agora Awards, knows how to spot a hoax because her Agora Awards is not one.

Given out by the Philippine Marketing Association (PMA), an organization of marketing professionals, the Agora Awards follows a rigorous selection process and doesn’t require an entry or a processing fee for the nominees, much less a sponsorship fee from the awardees. Through a media campaign, marketing practitioners and the public are invited to send in their nominations by filling out a nomination form. The awards committee requires documents to support the nominations. A board of judges from

the industry deliberates on the nominees. The awards have seven categories including Outstanding Achievement in Export Marketing, Marketing Achievement in Entrepreneurship, and Marketing Company of the Year.

“If they ask you for a sponsorship fee before they give you the award, then it means that the award is practically for sale,” Sason said.

Karl Maclean, chairman of Superbrands Marketing International (Philippines), shares Sason’s view. The UK-originated Superbrands operates in 57 countries including five in Asia, often with the support of the trade department or its equivalent. It publishes coffee-table books of the top brands in each country, which are distributed worldwide to member countries.

Superbrands doesn’t call for nominations.

A research company, Synovate, gathers information on existing local brands in each country based on predetermined criteria and submits the list to a “Superbrands council” usually composed of retired marketing practitioners.

The council then deliberates on the final group of award recipients. “It’s a long process and we are careful to do everything correctly,” Maclean explained.

Sason suggested that before dealing with these organizations, nominees should investigate their background and legitimacy, and whether their nomination processes are transparent. “Many will just tell you that your brand or company is an awardee, but won’t reveal the criteria as to why you have won. Check their list of past awardees, be suspicious as to why some of the criteria and the winners are too specific, too defined.”

One organization whose award categories are too specific is the National Product Quality Excellence Awards (NPQE). Its list of awardees reads like a phone book. In the second half of 2005 alone, the NPQE honored around 500 awardees, including those

for Best Industrial & Medical Grade Oxygen, Best Chinese Hand-Pulled Restaurant, and Best Waterproofing Membrane. There were even awards for Best Office Partition Provider and Best Tattoo Service.

Manuel Oyson III, NPQE president, told NEWSBREAK: “We narrow down [our awards] to unique categories because we also want to recognize SMEs which are usually overshadowed by the big players.”

Oyson said the NPQE determines the awardees based on consumer feedback. Researchers are deployed to key cities nationwide handing out survey sheets to consumers. The survey sheet is also published in *Consumer Today* magazine. It asks respondents to write brands in order of recall and rate them, from 1 to 5, 5 being the highest, according to product durability, value pricing, truth in advertising, and customer satisfaction. After gathering the data, the brands are sub-divided into national and local levels. The brands with the highest ratings are invited to receive the awards that include the Seal of Product Quality.

A review of the list of awardees, however, brings one to ask how some unfamiliar brands can beat more popular ones at the national level. For instance, a brand of hair conditioner, Susie’s Natural Body Essential/Hair Serum, won the Best Leave-On Conditioner award over more established brands that have ample advertising support and product distribution.

Oyson admitted that they charge a fee of at least P15,000 per awardee to cover the costs of the award ceremony and for the media mileage the brands will get as a recipient of the Seal of Product Quality.

He emphasized that the “awards subsidy fee” doesn’t mean that results are skewed. “You have to deserve the award first before we ask for a sponsorship and not the other way around. No institution can survive without sponsorship. Even the ISO charges a fee as cost of processing.”

What happens if the company declines to pay the awards subsidy fee? Oyson contradicted himself: “Then we can’t give you the award. If you accept the award, we need to ask for a fee to cover our expenses and the media mileage.”

We got the name of another marketing excellence award that surfaced recently and whose credibility the PMA is also questioning. We are not publishing its name until we get the organization’s side.

If prospective awardees are not vigilant about the credibility of such organizations, the award bodies will thrive while undeserving brands earn “prestige.” The consuming public loses. ■





LUIS LIWANAG

# START THEM YOUNG

Sports clinics can help children develop physical abilities as well as mental, emotional, and social skills

By PERRY LEGASPI

**S**HOULD YOUR kids' education stop now that they are on vacation from school?

Not necessarily. Kids can learn more through activities out of the classrooms.

One of the best ways for kids to learn new skills is through sports. This is something that various establishments and organizations offering sports clinics during vacation periods must have realized earlier than the rest of us, thus the range of lessons and activities is getting wider.

For the offerings this summer, the list generated by NEWSBREAK is quite long: some of the offerings include aikido, bowling, badminton, basketball, chess, football, gymnastics, ice skating, karatedo, swimming, tennis, among others. The good news is, the number of sports and recreational centers in the provinces that are into this can rival Manila's. *(Get this list of sports clinics, offerings, addresses, contact details, and fees from [www.newsbreak.com.ph](http://www.newsbreak.com.ph)).*

Researchers say that kids who are into sports develop not only their physical abilities but also their mental, emotional, and social skills.

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), for example, wants children of different ages to take part in school sports. It noted that kids not only benefit from the exercise but also develop "healthy habits that will continue throughout their lives."

APTA also stressed that team sports help build self-esteem. And there is the camaraderie in team sports that can develop into life-long friendships and fond memories that kids will cherish as they grow up.

Team sports also help develop children's problem-solving skills in a group setting, as well as social skills that can help them become better students and responsible citizens.

"However, when introducing them to team sports, parents should de-emphasize competition and emphasize having fun," cautions physical therapist Lisa Jesberg of the Atlanta Sports Medicine Center in Virginia Beach, Va., in an Internet article.

In the Philippines, a good argument for enrolling children in summer sports clinics is the fact that very few schools have programs that provide balance between academic and physical activities.

Sports, along with culture, was taken out of the Department of Education (DEPED), which until a few years back was known as

the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports. The sports program was transferred to the Philippine Sports Commission, which was subsequently put under the management of the Department of Health.

Director Rolando Brillantes, an educator, researcher, and writer who headed the Bureau of Physical Education and School Sports before the education department got splintered, said that physical education is a great tool to develop students' mental skills.

"In physical education, kids are taught certain routines. The information to do these routines properly, like the proper way of jumping, rolling, or running are filtered by the brain and transmitted to the body, like the muscles.

"At first the muscles will not properly react to what the brains are telling them to accomplish, but through continuous practice, kids learn to use their muscles properly. You will see that kids who try to follow the routines properly are most likely the kids who can follow discussions inside the classrooms because they are not only doing routines, they are thinking," Brillantes explained.

To heed the experts' advice, here are some tips on how to start kids into sports:

**1.** Encourage children to walk or ride a bicycle. But first, parents have to change their own attitude toward walking. Instead of giving their children money for jeepney or tricycle fare, parents could start asking their kids to use the bicycle or tell them to walk if their errand or activity is just a few blocks away.

**2.** Plan activities with family or friends. One way of doing this is to ask your family and neighbors to visit a park. You can bring your bicycles or rent one and just bike away as a group. Your family and neighbors can also join family fun runs.

**3.** Start regulating your child's TV, electronic gaming, and Internet time. Instead of just watching TV, destroying electronic enemies, or Internet chatting, your kids can be enrolled in different sports clinics, which can be fun for the whole family.

**4.** Take your child to different sports activities such as school-based or professional sporting events. You can later discuss with him or her how a team won, or why an athlete lost in an event.

**5.** Look for a sports program that your child can actively join. In the Philippines, the two most popular sports are basketball and volleyball. Encourage your kids to join summer and fiesta tournaments in your community.

Parents, make time to involve your kids in sports. Start this summer, enroll them in a sports clinic near home. ■





# 10x17

**T**HERE WERE no photographs. On the morning after the brutal dispersal of anti-Arroyo rallies on February 24, newspapers didn't carry the most dramatic shots of people being truncheoned, hosed, dragged, arrested without warrants at the EDSA Shrine, Santolan, and Ayala Avenue.

The President had declared a state of emergency through Presidential Proclamation 1017. This could have caused some publishers or editors to exercise self-censorship. Or maybe newspaper space was just too limited to accommodate the many good photographs that lensmen produced from the frontlines.

If the newspapers wouldn't have them two galleries will have them until May, in an exhibit called "10 x 17." The Oarhouse (in Malate, Manila) and the Raw File Images Gallery (on Boni Avenue in Mandaluyong City) will display some 60 images printed in 10" x 17" digital printouts.

The collection includes images of protests by various sectors and guardians of civil liberties against the Presidential Proclamation 1017 until it was lifted on March 3.

The "10 x 17" collection will feature the works of 20 photojournalists, young and old. Also on display will be works by veteran photographers from their coverage of the martial law years under Ferdinand Marcos' Presidential Decree 1081.

The public will finally get to see those photographs. —**Jimmy Domingo**







# Tips on Pinoy Cooking

WANT TO whip up a great *calderata*? Or maybe serve your family extra-special helpings of traditional Filipino favorites like *callos*, *kare-kare*, or *pinaupong manok* but can't quite get the taste right unless you use tons of Maggi's *ginisa* mix?

Weep not. Turn on your personal computer and log on to any of the growing number of Web sites and blogs on Pinoy cooking. For starters, try out Pinoy Cook (<http://www.pinoycook.net>), where I got really divine recipe for *callos*. Instead of the usual MSG-filled mixes, the recipe made use of all sorts of herbs to enhance the flavor and aroma of the dish.



There are a host of other sites. There are apparently a lot of Filipinos who are raring to share their treasured recipes online. Filipino Food (<http://www.filipinofoods.info>) and Best Pinoy Cooking Recipes

(<http://pinoyrecipes.prepys.com/>) are just a few.

Keep on experimenting and mixing tips from these different sites. You should be cooking like a pro in no time at all.

—Gemma B. Bagayaua

## HISTORY ONLINE

IN COLLEGE, I used to spend big portions of my meager pocket money to photocopy pages of rare books on Philippine history at the UP Main Library's Filipiniana section.

Of particular interest then were such heavy tomes as Emma Helen Blair and J. A. Robertson's collection of chronicles written by early Spanish explorers on the Philippine Islands—which lowly,

unemployed, and financially challenged students (like me) couldn't afford to buy on their own. That time, if all the copies of Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las*

*Islas Filipinas* were out, one had no choice but to put one's name on the list of would-be borrowers and wait patiently.

Nowadays, students need not wait in line or photocopy these precious accounts of our distant past. They are now available online, in your preferred “soft” copy format (PDF and others), for free.

If you're one of those who have yet to discover this, check out <http://manybooks.net/> or <http://www.gutenberg.org/> and start downloading.

—Gemma B. Bagayaua



## PERFECT ALTERNATIVE

EQUIPPING EVERY computer in the office with licensed software nowadays can be prohibitive for small business.

The latest Microsoft operating system (Windows XP Professional OEM) costs almost P9,000. This doesn't even include software you will need to conduct your business affairs—from word processing to creating spreadsheets and presentations, and maintaining your database of contacts and appointments. To accomplish these things, you will have to buy another software: Microsoft's Office Professional OEM, which could set you back by a whopping P17,000 per computer.

So what is a small business owner to do? You can take the chance and use unlicensed software—which could put your business at the risk of lawsuits from the software companies and treble your costs. Or, you can use open-source software.

We recently encountered what may be the perfect alternative to MS Office: Open Office. Produced by Sun Microsystems, this great invention is much like your MS Office, only it's free for commer-

cial use. It has a word processor (Writer), a spreadsheet (Calc), a presentation creator (Impress), and a database (Base).

It uses most of the shortcuts used on MS Office, so employees should have little difficulty adjusting to this. By default, Writer documents are saved in ODT (Open Document Text) format. But you can also save them in Microsoft Word (.doc) format.

There are a number of nifty features you will surely love about Open Office. It allows you to export directly to PDF (portable document format). A full-featured 2-D and 3-D graphics program (Draw) also comes with this great technological bundle. Visit their Web site: [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) to download the program or get more details.

—Gemma B. Bagayaua



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## **SLOW FOOD: PHILIPPINE CULINARY TRADITIONS**

Edited by Erlinda Enriquez Panlilio and Felice Prudente Sta. Maria  
Art by Manuel Baldemor  
Anvil Publishing, 2005

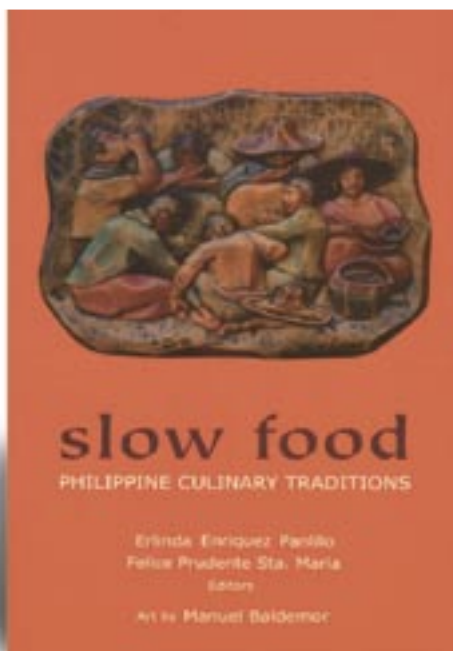
IN THE context of today's fast pace and array of instants, it's a luxury to enjoy slow food, "traditional food...prepared from scratch with no shortcuts, using only the finest ingredients acquired at the peak of their season." What a distinct blessing for one to still be able to enjoy the *pospas* that healed many a childhood ailment, the distinct *pochero* of Sunday family lunches that took days to produce, and the homemade cakes using Philippine-made guava jelly as instant filling or condensed milk thickened and browned in their cans, as special frosting.

The lost flavors of the past are captured through the fascinating essays and recipes in this book. The treasured recipes that follow each essay and were generously shared by contributors bolster the hope that today's cooks may imbibe the kitchen secrets of yesteryears.

In keeping with the theme of the book, the preface by Sta. Maria is fittingly entitled *Pampagana* (appetite teaser or appetizer), while the concluding essay by Panlilio is *Panghimagas* (sweet ending; dessert). Sta. Maria poses questions yet to be pursued by researchers leading to the appreciation and preservation of Philippine culinary traditions. "Are there cooks, families, towns...not credited for beginning a food or beverage which has become mainstream? Are there foods and food establishments that ought to be considered National Culinary

Treasures?" Thus, these initial explorations in the collection are, writes Sta. Maria, mere taste teasers for the full banquet of our Philippine culinary heritage.

It's fascinating to read about the 20 varieties of wild rice, the *dulces* and the *putos* on dining tables, and the difference between *chocolate-eh* and *chocolate-ah* and the original Bulacan hot chocolate being neither ah nor eh!



Panlilio concludes with her "Slow Food is Love" essay, affirming over and over again that slow food is not slow food without love. For if the family heirloom recipes, even for the suman, bibingka, and the *pastilles* are so fondly remembered, it is because of the warmth and caring they evoke and recapture. Slow food takes time to prepare and love can only be the rationale for the old-fashioned, laborious way of cooking.

C. Horatius Mosquera says it best when he quotes his Lola Encar who upheld that "food must be prepared, cooked, and enjoyed with love. Otherwise we would be no better than pigs at the trough."

The book is dedicated to the late food writer and researcher

Doreen G. Fernandez, who first introduced Manila food enthusiasts to the Slow Food Movement of Barolo, Italy, which has flourished as a reaction to fast food and the fast pace of modern living. The Manila Slow Food Convivium makes its formal debut as an organization advocating the preservation of Philippine food literature with this well-produced book with its members' essays and those of the winners of the Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing Award which inform, entertain, and drive readers to their own nostalgic food trips; its appetizing orange cover, its end pages with Baldemor art subtly embossed on them, and a helpful glossary.

## **GUIDE TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Alexander Gilles and Reuben Mondejar  
Sinag-Tala Publishers, 2006

*GUIDE TO Entrepreneurship* not only provides a step-by-step guide to starting your own business. A substantial part of the book helps the reader assess himself or herself whether he or she is entrepreneur material.

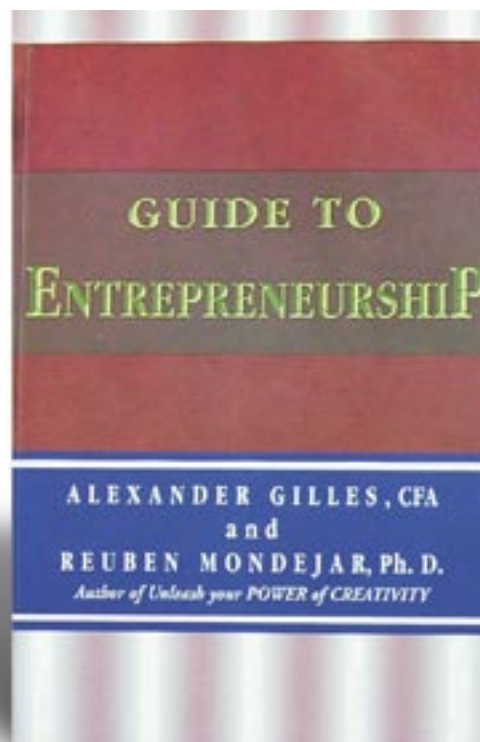
Alexander Gilles, a banker who taught finance and entrepreneurship, and Reuben Mondejar, director of the City University of Hongkong's Masters in Global Business Management Program, are supportive of entrepreneurial efforts. They say that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the century for entrepreneurs because more and more big businesses downsize and subcontract.

The aspiring entrepreneur can also draw encouragement from business trends where it is not the size that matters (in fact it could even be a liability) but the quality of service.

While the authors don't specifically cite the Philippines, they say there are more entrepreneurs in developing countries where "people feel they are on their own...and are getting no help" because there are less controls, making it ideal for them "to break the rules" as they fight for survival.

Why make a business plan when there are entrepreneurs who also succeeded even without adequate research? The authors argue that the book will help them replace "I think" with "I know."

The book is sprinkled with anecdotes about entrepreneurs like Bill Gates, Michael Dell, Xerox founder Chester Carlson, and Barbie maker Ruth Handler, among others. It lacks, however, examples from successful (and unsuccessful) Filipino entrepreneurs. It could have made the visceral exercise closer to home. ■



## AN ANDAYA FAN

**D**EFENSE SECRETARY Avelino Cruz Jr. appears to have found a soul mate in the Cabinet. In a recent interview with **NEWSBREAK**, Cruz gushed about the appointment of Rolando Andaya Jr. as budget secretary.

“He knows the budget [and the budget process] so well,” an animated Cruz said. “*Ang sarap kausap* (It’s so good talking to him)!”

It’s hard to find people who get excited by budgets, but Cruz is one of them. Under his leadership, the Department of National Defense started a multi-year



budget planning process. They’re the first government agency to do so.

Now, Cruz has found an audience for what could be, well, boring stuff. ■

## WHO’S AFTER NAPOCOR?

**A**N OVERSEAS reader sent us this observation: “Over the past few days, I’ve seen three columnists come out with the same topic and issues against NAPOCOR, using the same data—Conrad Banal of the *Inquirer* (March 18), Neal Cruz of the *Inquirer* (March 22), and Fel Maragay of the *Manila Standard Today* (March 23).

If you take a look at the columns, the facts are the same and the conclusions that they are trying to present are the same.

“There are no coincidences. This was a column feed. Someone is trying to take down NAPOCOR officials, for what reason I don’t know. My sense is that someone wants NAPOCOR’s privatization to proceed post-haste and, considering how bad the investment climate is, somebody will try to snap up those assets.”

Check out the columns and make your own conclusion. ■



## GENEROUS AS EVER

**F**ORMER MANILA congressman Mark Jimenez’s deed could have gone unnoticed if not for the candidness of a former colleague of his in the House of Representatives.

A **NEWSBREAK** source said that journalists who had waited for hours during last year’s arrival of former Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez were apparently “rewarded” for their “patience.”

Quoting a congressman, the NAPOCOR source said Jimenez’s handlers shelled out US\$100 each to some of those who had covered the arrival of the controversial personality.

“Were you not there?” the congressman asked one woman journalist.

“No,” she replied.

Then came the shocker from the congressman. “Ok, I’ll just give you your share.”

The journalist politely turned down the offer.

It seems bad habits never die for persons associated with Jimenez, who is reputed to be “generous” to journalists. ■



## VENGEFUL JOURNALIST

**T**HIS VETERAN, hard-hitting journalist has a reputation of mincing no words in criticizing government officials over alleged irregularities and misplaced policies.

Just recently, a Cabinet secretary came under fire in the widely read column of this veteran journalist over a headline-hogging incident concerning national security.

The journalist had been lamenting about certain inaction of this Cabinet secretary on a controversy-plagued bureau under him.

Apparently piqued, a department undersecretary told **NEWSBREAK** his views on the seemingly endless tirades his boss had gotten from Mr. No Holds Barred.

"Maybe, it's related to a request he failed to get from us," the official told **NEWSBREAK**.

And the request? A roasted calf for Mr. No Holds Barred's birthday party.

Second, it could be related to the security detail assigned to Mr. No Holds Barred, an elite unit from the uniformed services.

Years back, a senior officer admitted to **NEWSBREAK** that in order to "silence" Mr. No Holds Barred, they had to give him an Uzi sub-machine gun to go along with an undetermined amount of money for him to stop hitting at his boss.

True enough, the tirades stopped when the gifts reached Mr. No Holds Barred.

Talk about objectivity, decency, and uprightness in the profession. ■



## HE'S BACK!

**N**INE MONTHS after his relief as brigade commander, Col. Ricardo "Dick" Morales is back. Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon recently reinstated Morales as commander of the 402nd Brigade in Bukidnon.

Remember that Morales, a highly promising officer, was yanked out of his post because of an e-mail he sent his Yahoo group of PMA graduates in May last year. At that time, a controversial resort for soldiers in Boracay was the stuff of the front pages of national dailies.

An angry Morales sent an e-mail critical of the priorities of the Armed Forces. Excerpts: "The time for talking is over; the time for action is now. The next coup will be peaceful and open. Enough of this organizational stupidity."

Morales then said that his e-mail was taken out of context.

Since 1986, when Morales joined the military rebels who plotted a coup against Ferdinand Marcos, the officer has kept a low profile. He has avoided interviews about his role during that historic period. Morales has always stayed loyal to the chain of command.

While out of the Army, Morales explored some business ventures. But it seems like he is back to his first love: the military. ■

## THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER

**I**T HAD all the makings of a movie scene, except that it happened in real life.

A military general summons a young Army lieutenant who has gotten his daughter pregnant.

"So what are your plans now? Are you going to marry my daughter?" asks the general.

"I'll think about it, sir," comes the terse reply of the Army officer.

Enraged, the general shouts at the young officer, "What did you say?"

"Yes, sir," the junior officer replies anew, eventually making the fuming general cool down.

The protagonists in this real-life drama? Then Armed Forces chief Gen. Lisandro Abadia and then 2Lt. Jason Aquino, baron of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1991 who is being investigated for his role in the aborted February 24 coup. ■



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